Farewell Address

WASHINGTON

Bunker Hill Orations

WEBSTER

NEWSON & COMPANY

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

PREFATORY NOTE 5

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL REVIEW

The Events of Washington's Administrations . . . 6

RHETORICAL STUDY

The Nature of Oratory 12

The Different Kinds of Oratory 16

The First Bunker Hill Oration 18

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

George Washington 21

Daniel Webster 22

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY 24

THE FAREWELL ADDRESS 25

THE FIRST BUNKER HILL ORATION 46

THE SECOND BUNKER HILL ORATION 71

PREFATORY NOTE

THE first Bunker Hill Oration and the Farewell Address are among the pieces recommended for study in preparation for entrance to college. To them we have added in this book, the second Bunker Hill Oration. The three orations—for the address may be considered as an oration—are good examples of the occasional speech, a form of public speaking in which Americans have always been eminent. Our introduction calls attention to the chief matters for study, from the historical standpoint as well as from that of literature.

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL REVIEW

The student will find these three speeches representative of three periods in the early history of our country. The Bunker Hill orations naturally bring vividly before us the crucial time at the beginning of the Revolution. Washington's address deals with the first years in our history as a nation. Webster's orations present also a review of the first half-century of our national life. Some little knowledge of these periods is desirable, if not necessary, for every student of the orations. Everybody knows the story of the first days of the Revolution and of the Battle of Bunker Hill, so that we need give no account of it. And the general history of the first fifty years of national life is so well summarized by Webster that it is not necessary to give more information than will be found in the notes. But the political events of Washington's administrations are not so well known, so that we may well give of them a slight sketch, that may make the allusions of the address easier to understand.

Events of Washington's Administrations

When Washington resigned his commission as general of the armies of the United States, and retired to his estate at Mount Vernon, the country had been for several years governed under the Articles of Confederation. These Articles had been adopted during the Revolutionary War, (1778), as a form of union which should serve to

give political character to the combined colonies that had thrown off allegiance to England. They formed a federation of democracies.

The former Colonies, now States, preserved almost untouched the independence for which they were then fighting. Each state gave up certain powers, the power to go to war independently, or to make peace, or to make alliances, or to coin money on its own account, and gave these powers to the general federation. But the federation then formed was very different from what we now instinctively think of as a nation. There was a federal legislature called a congress, but in it each state was represented by a delegation which voted as a body, each state having one vote. There was no federal executive, but during the times when Congress was not in session, there was a committee consisting of one member from each state, which exercised the powers of the larger body. There was no executive and no judiciary which should determine the meaning of the fundamental document and legislation passed under it, so that each state had a right to determine the sense of legislative action as it saw fit. The government under the Confederation was very weak: it had power to legislate to a certain degree only; it had no power to determine and enforce any especial construction of its own legislation. Its powers were hardly more than advisory. Under the stress of common danger and war, the different states were able to triumph over particular needs for the common good. But when peace was declared and independence secure, it was found that self-interest often stood in the way of any particular public action. Congress soon became entirely powerless, for the different states obeyed its mandates only when it suited their convenience. It was often impossible to hold meetings of Congress for lack of a quorum. It was practically

impossible to collect the taxes required for the national debt. It was impossible to maintain an army and sometimes even to carry out national obligations. Foreign nations, therefore, paid little attention to the new nation, but suited their own convenience in dealing with her. England refused to carry out the conditions of the Treaty of Peace or to send a minister to the United States. Whatever may have been her real motives, there was sufficient reason offered in the fact that the United States had not been able to enforce the payment of debts that the Treaty had agreed upon.

It became apparent that a more perfect Union was necessary, and, to pass over details, the Constitution was projected and adopted. It was not a satisfactory document at the time, for the various conflicting interests had each to give up something that seemed important. But time has shown its fundamental excellence and even on its adoption it was generally allowed to be an improvement over the earlier articles, although it was adopted at first by nine states only, and by some of those by very close votes. Still it was adopted by enough states to constitute the government it contemplated, and in time all of the Old Thirteen acceded to it.

The Constitution provided for a national government of three branches. The legislative body had a popular branch as well as a branch in which the states were represented practically as such. The judicial branch was a most important addition, whereby the national government was enabled to define or construe its own powers and to enforce them. The executive branch also placed the administration of the government in a form far better suited to action than a Congressional committee.

For the highest executive position the nation thought instinctively of Washington. The old provision for elec-

tion of President and Vice-President was that each elector should cast two votes without specifying the particular office for which he was voting. Each delegate cast one of his votes for Washington, who accordingly became the first President of the United States.

Political parties were not then in existence, in the way in which we now think of them. But there was a considerable difference of opinion in the country in regard to the kind of government that was most suitable for a free people. Some believed in a strong single central government after the model of the governments of European nations: and there were a few who even believed in a monarchy. Others believed in a very loose confederation of sovereign states: and there were a few who held that the less government there was, the better. Thus two parties had practically been formed: the Federalists who believed in a strong central government, and the Anti-Federalists, later called Democrats who believed in no stronger government than was absolutely necessary. Both believed in the Constitution, when once it was adopted, but the Federalists believed in construing it broadly as regarded the powers of the general government, and the Democrats believed that a strict construction was advisable, whereby the general government assumed no more power than was in so many words granted to it.

Washington had a great distrust of political parties, and having himself been the choice of the whole people, he naturally felt that he ought to represent the different elements of political opinion. He therefore named Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State, and Edmund Randolph, as Attorney-General. They were Anti-Federalists, and to represent the Federalists he named Alexander Hamilton, as Secretary of the Treasury, and Henry Knox, as Secretary of War.

Certain policies of a financial character, however, led very naturally to a more definite drawing of party lines. It was no longer a question as to whether the general government should raise the money necessary for the national debt and for the carrying on of the government: that had been settled by the Constitution. But there was a good deal of question as to the methods to be followed and the financial system to be established. And at just this point there was added to the internal questions on which party feeling would arise, the external questions aroused by the French Revolution and the following war between France and other nations, especially England.

France had been of immense service to the Colonies during the Revolutionary War, and it seemed to many that when France followed, in appearance at least, the example of the United States, and declared herself a republic, that the United States was bound to return the service that had been rendered her, and take up arms in aid of her former ally. And if open alliance was impossible, it appeared that at least the United States might give what silent aid came from allowing herself to be used as a basis for naval and other operations.

Washington, however, thought otherwise, and so did his Cabinet. It was apparent that in aiding France either openly or in secret, the United States would put in peril the independence just won. At all events the open hostility of England was an extraordinarily dangerous matter. England held Canada and Florida, she still held the line of forts on the western frontier, and she was mistress of the sea. When France had aided America, she was clearly taking an occasion to carry on a hardly interrupted struggle against an old adversary. If America should now aid France, she would take up arms against natural friends and run the risk of losing much of what

she had gained at very great effort. Washington, therefore, issued a Proclamation of Neutrality.

This position of the President aroused immense feeling throughout the country. Sympathy with France was strong and many felt that it was the plain duty of the United States to unsheathe the sword at once in aid of her old friend. The French minister, M. Genet, who had been sent from the French Republic, at once began a course of action which would soon have dragged the United States into open war: he commissioned cruisers, established courts for condemning prizes, raised money, and undertook to recruit men for the French army. He was informed that these acts must cease, and in time they did cease. But his American sympathisers felt that the position of Washington was wholly unjustifiable and attacked him with the utmost bitterness.

The course of England at this time was not such as to excite kindly feeling. As has been said, she sent no minister to the United States, and refused to carry out the provisions of the Treaty of Peace, alleging, truly, that the United States had not yet carried out her part as far as payment of certain debts was concerned. Now her action against the French had a most harmful effect on American commerce, and her impressment of American seamen on the pretense that they were Englishmen, added to the feeling. Washington believed that some arrangement must be made, and therefore with the assent of the Senate he sent John Jay to negotiate a treaty. Jay's Treaty, as it was called, was held by the President to be as good a settlement as could be attained, but it very naturally failed to satisfy everybody entirely, while many felt that the rights of the United States had been wholly given up. The President signed the Treaty and increased the popu-

lar abuse which the Neutrality Proclamation had called down on him.

Washington was accused of absolute incapacity and utter unfaithfulness to his trust. He was charged with usurpation and treason. He was threatened with impeachment and assassination. But within a year an improvement in trade had shown the wisdom of Jay's Treaty, and shortly afterwards the excesses of the French showed that it would have been impossible to have linked our interests to theirs. And in the summer of 1796, when the question of presidential election came up, it appeared that in spite of party differences and foreign sympathies, Washington still had the unanimous trust of the people of the United States. It was desired that he should serve another term.

Washington, however, felt that he had earned the right to retire, and he also felt that it was dangerous to the liberties of the people to begin the practice of serving three terms as president. He therefore published an address to the American people that expressed his position, and took occasion also to give a statement of his views on certain most interesting fundamental principles.

RHETORICAL STUDY

The Nature of Oratory

The study of Rhetoric is one of the most ancient of our modern studies: from about 450 B. C. to the present time there has been an uninterrupted tradition of rhetorical study, formed by the Greeks, transmitted by them to the Romans, and so diffused over the western world. There have been changes of opinion and of method, and indeed of fundamental principle, but in spite of change many of the branches of study, of the technical terms, and of

divisions and classifications, have remained the same from the first days of the study till now.

The very earliest subject of rhetorical study and practice was oratory. In fact the word *rhetoric* and the word *oratory* have, in their originals, almost the same meaning. One comes from the Greek and one from the Latin, and each in its respective language designated the art of speaking rather than of writing. In those early days the art of speaking was most carefully followed, while the art of writing was confined at first almost entirely to the writing of poetry. Rhetorical prose in the great majority of its present literary uses was entirely unknown.

Oratory, then, the most ancient branch of rhetorical study, has some of the advantages and some of the drawbacks necessary to such a condition. It has the advantages of centuries of tradition and study, but it has the drawback of formality and conventionalism. Oratorical form has in it something that we are apt to fancy is artificial and not natural, and this characteristic, real or imaginary, is apt to make us think that oratory is unsuited to an age like our own, which is very practical and very desirous of keeping close to the realities of life.

Oratory, however, is not a matter with which we have no concern. It is neither more nor less than the art of public speaking. We should not imagine that public speaking is necessarily the elaborate and florid utterance of a man who stands upon a platform and addresses large audiences. Public speaking has many different kinds, and properly includes any kind of speaking different from ordinary conversation, whether one speaks to six persons or six thousand. One can talk without thought or reserve to a friend or two, where each one has a chance to say what he will, and the conversation flows on in a manner that would seem very crude if it were written down. But

as soon as a number of people are gathered together to listen to one speaker, then there comes a difference in one's manner of speech, and with this difference public speaking begins.

Anybody that likes can make experiment of this. If you think that you can talk to a dozen people in just the same way that you talk to one, just try. Ask a dozen friends, schoolfellows, pupils, to listen to you, and try to talk for ten minutes on any subject that you like. You will see at once that there is a difference between such talking, and your talking to any one of those twelve separately. It is true that many men can talk to an audience in much the same easy, conversational way that they use in talking to one person, but most men cannot. It is true, also, that some men who have the habit of talking to good sized audiences often fall into much the same public manner in talking to one person, but most men do not. There is a difference between conversation with one man or with a few, and talking to an audience, however small. And the latter kind of talking is public speaking.

It may be asked whether we should call talking to a dozen people by the name of "oratory." It is true that we generally keep that word for the more elaborate forms of public speaking. But we ought to remember that what we call oratory is a form of public speaking and not a form of conversation. Public speakers may speak in a very elaborate and formal way, or they may speak in a very simple and informal way, but that will depend upon the circumstances under which they are speaking, the subject, the place, the people. In principle it is all oratory, although undoubtedly the word is used with a certain limitation.

It should be added, however, that one reason for this

limitation lies in the fact that public speaking must almost of necessity have something formal, something not wholly natural, about it. For one thing, it is always something of an occasion that gathers a number of people to hear what one may have to say to them. It may not be a very important occasion, but generally in every-day life we have only to talk to one person, or perhaps two or three. When more are gathered, it is a little out of the common course, and we cannot feel exactly as though it were not.

From all of which we shall come easily to the idea that the forms and kinds of oratory will differ, that there is no set form, no definite manner of public speaking that everyone must adopt. A man will speak differently when he is speaking to a great and dignified body like the English Parliament, and when he is talking at a political meeting in a country town. A man will use one form of address when he is speaking to thousands on some great celebration and when he is talking to a few people gathered together for some special consultation. There will be different styles of address proper to the law courts, to legislative halls, to the pulpit, to the lecture platform.

Yet one point should be noted. The more dignified the assembly or the occasion, the more formal will be the manner of address. When Webster spoke in the Senate, he addressed his remarks solely to the Vice-President, who presided over that body, and he alluded to other senators by their official titles rather than by their names, because that was the general custom of legislative bodies. And in like manner when he spoke to the "uncounted multitude" on June 17th, 1825, to the "vast concourse" the gatherings of thousands, that came together to be present at the great celebration, he spoke to them in a more formal

and elaborate way than he would have used had he been talking to a few friends in his own house. An easy, natural, informal mode of address would have seemed out of place. Dignified expressions, a somewhat elaborate sentence-structure, a greater freedom in the use of figure, these things, though not a part of our natural mode of speech, were natural to so great and important an occasion. So with the Farewell Address of Washington. It was published on a great occasion. Washington wrote as the honored chief magistrate of a great people on a great occasion, namely, on the occasion of his retiring to private life, not speaking to them face to face certainly, but reaching a far wider audience than could have listened to his voice. He too, therefore, adopted a mode of speech somewhat more formal and dignified than would have suited a lesser occasion. But the point is not that these speeches are elaborate in style: the true point is that each is in a style appropriate to the occasion.

The Different Kinds of Oratory

The ancients made a three-fold difference in their study of oratory, between the oratory of the legislative body, the oratory of the law-court, and the oratory for the assemblage on some ceremonial occasion. To these kinds of public speaking, the succeeding centuries have added another that did not exist in Greece or Rome, namely, the oratory of the pulpit. To a greater or less extent, people have recognized that these three or four divisions have real differences at bottom. In a legislative assembly a speaker wishes to make his hearers act in a certain way, usually he wishes to persuade them to vote for some course of action that he is advising. In a law court the speaker has rather a different view: he commonly wishes

to make judge or jury believe that certain events occurred as he thinks they occurred, or that a certain transaction was of the nature that he thinks it was. The preacher has generally neither of these ideas in mind; his desire is usually to create or strengthen the Christian character of his hearers. The orator at some formal ceremony, again, has a different aim still; he wishes to interest his hearers in some given events or ideas, and to make them follow along some line of thought that is of importance at the time. In our time there are a great many different forms of such oratory. We have not only the oration on some great occasion, but all sorts of speeches made at all sorts of gatherings, especially after-dinner speeches, and also all kinds of platform addresses, whether political in character or of the more general class that we call lectures.

The speeches in our volume are of this last class: the ancients called it demonstrative, and we more commonly call it occasional oratory. They are speeches for occasions. The speaker does not attempt to convince or persuade his audience on any given point; he wishes to present to the consideration certain great ideas, or facts, or events. Webster was a famous orator in the three older forms of oratory; the Reply to Hayne is generally thought of as the best exhibition of his legislative speaking; the speech on the White murder case is taken to represent his power in the law courts. The two Bunker Hill orations are among his best known occasional speeches. The address of Washington is also an occasional address, although the powers of Washington as a man of action were so much greater than as an orator, that we hesitate to think of him as other than one who (as Antony says of himself), speaks right on without action or utterance or the power of words. Still on the occasion of his

retiring from public office, Washington wished to give his opinion on the questions of the time, and although he did so in writing he took the form of an address. How successful he was is shown by the way in which his advice has remained in the hearts of the American people.

The First Bunker Hill Oration

The aim of Webster in this speech is not hard to get at. He is not speaking to a body gathered for the purpose of taking action on public or private affairs. He is speaking to a body of people gathered to celebrate a great event. It is not his effort to persuade to action: it is rather to arouse the interest, and to put the great event that is celebrated in its proper relation to history so that the hearers will understand it, and think rightly about it. To gain a definite idea of Webster's thought and his presentation of it, we may make an analysis of his speeches. The first oration will serve as an example of such work.

We shall find that Webster has no definite plan or proposal that forms the main object of his speech. Burke in the well-known speech on Conciliation with America, had a definite plan which he wished to explain and to persuade his hearers to adopt. Webster has not: he has, rather, a great event in mind which arouses his thoughts and feelings and reflections, and which he wishes should arouse his hearers. We shall find, however, on p. 61, a remark which will give us a clue to the topic as it existed in his mind. "The leading reflection to which this occasion seems to invite us respects the great changes which have happened in the fifty years since the battle of Bunker Hill was fought." Webster then made some such division of his topic as this:—

I. The battle of Bunker Hill.

II. The period since the battle and the great changes incident to it.

On the first of these topics his thoughts naturally followed certain lines. He did not need to give an account of so important an event, which was, indeed, within the recollection of many of his hearers. But he could well exhibit its importance, could refer briefly to the events that were celebrated, and could offer the grateful acknowledgments of his hearers to those who had been concerned in the battle itself, and in the following events. These things he did, though not in exactly the order noted, and then turned to his second topic, the changes which had followed the period of the battle. Here he naturally confined himself to a broad view of the subject and considered only the great political changes; on p. 63, he says, "The great wheel of political revolution began to move in America." He considers the advance in political conditions in France, Greece, South America, which had followed the establishment of the American Republic. The benefits which American example had produced form a subject for "honest exultation," as he says. It remains for America to be sensible of the obligations thus laid upon her.

It will be well to note these views in an

OUTLINE

Introduction. The Occasion.
- a. In relation to earlier events.
- b. The monument.
- c. In relation to later events.

I. Reflections on the Battle:
- a. Address to participants and other Revolutionary survivors.
- b. The events of the day itself.
- c. Address to Lafayette.

II. Reflections on the period since the Battle:
   a. Changes in fifty years.
   b. America's part in them.

Such a speech is readily seen to be very different from Burke's, for instance, in its aim and object, but it is not very different in its need of a definite and clearly moving thought nor in the dignified and somewhat elaborate form of language in which it is couched. The two assemblies before which the orations were delivered were very different, but each demanded a mode of address more formal and dignified than that of everyday conversation, and each speaker felt himself led to adopt a certain elaborate mode of expression which had become traditional among great public speakers since the time of the Greeks.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

George Washington

GEORGE WASHINGTON was born in Westmoreland Co., Va., Feb. 22, 1732, of a representative and distinguished Virginian family. He received the usual education at home and at school. In 1748 he was employed to survey land belonging to Lord Fairfax, on the western part of the state. In 1751, he was made adjutant-general of one of the western districts of Virginia. In 1753, he was sent on an expedition to the French Commander on the Ohio. In 1754 he commanded a small force which defeated the French and Indians at Great Meadows, and the next year commanded the provincials in the disastrous expedition of General Braddock. He now became a person of great consideration in the Colony, and retiring from military service, married and devoted himself to his plantation at Mount Vernon. In 1758 he became a member of the House of Burgesses. In 1774 he was chosen a member of the Continental Congress, where he held the first place, according to Patrick Henry, in the matter of solid information and sound judgment. When it was determined to resist the British policy by arms, he was unanimously chosen Commander-in-chief and took command of the army, a fortnight after the battle of Bunker Hill. We need not follow him through the Revolution, except to say that it was only by his military skill and administrative genius as well as his noble patriotism and long-enduring patience that he was enabled to bring the country

through the most disastrous campaigns to final success at Yorktown. In 1783 he resigned his commission and retired to private life at Mount Vernon. The United States at this time was, as has been said, but a confederation of thirteen bodies politic: it was not till 1787 that by the adoption of the Constitution, it became really a nation with a national government. To the head of this government the people with one accord called Washington. With great reluctance he became President and with the help of able subordinates, especially Hamilton and Jefferson, established the general government. He served the regular term provided by the Constitution, and was unanimously chosen to a second term. The people would gladly have had him serve yet another term, but he declined re-election and issued the Farewell Address included in our volume. He returned to Mount Vernon where he lived to the last days of the century, and died, Dec. 14, 1799.

Daniel Webster

Daniel Webster was born at Salisbury, N. H., Jan. 18, 1782, the son of a farmer. He was not so rugged in health and strength as his brothers, and was therefore given a scholastic education. He studied at Exeter Academy and Dartmouth College, where he was graduated in 1801. He studied law and was admitted to the Suffolk bar, (Boston), in 1805. He practised law first, however, in New Hampshire, at Boscawen and Portsmouth. From New Hampshire he was sent to Congress in 1813, and served two terms. He acted with the Federalist party, which was at that time passing away, to be succeeded practically by the Whigs. In 1816, he removed to Boston and devoted himself to his legal practice. He soon became

very well known for his eloquence at the bar, and was again elected to Congress. He served from 1823 to 1827, in which year he became Senator; it is as Senator from Massachusetts that he will be remembered: he represented the state in the Senate for the rest of his life, except for the years 1841–1845, for a part of which time he was Secretary of State, and again in 1850–1852. In the Senate he is thought of chiefly as the champion of the principle of union, in opposition to any position that recognized sectional interests as superior to the cause of the Union. It is as such that he delivered his famous speech on Foote's Resolutions, commonly called the Reply to Hayne, in 1830. With Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, he represents the great epoch of Senatorial oratory. Webster was eloquent in each of these departments of oratory. The Reply to Hayne, is the finest specimen of his parliamentary eloquence, the speech on the White murder case is a good example of his legal speeches. He was also famous for his speeches on great occasions: our speeches are among the best known of the many addresses that he delivered before assemblies of his fellow-citizens on occasions when they desired to hear from their most eloquent spokesman. He died at his home at Marshfield, Mass., Oct. 24, 1852.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The students should first read through each oration; if there be time, in class. In any case it is well to read the oration aloud.

2. They may next run over the subject-matter, either with the help of the outline on p. 20, or making outlines for themselves. In such study one should take great pains to master and remember all divisions of the speech and all transitions and connections.

3. They should next study up or review the historical facts in question.

4. They may then exercise themselves on the rhetorical aspects of the oratory. What kinds of words are used? What sort of sentences? What sort of figures and how many?

5. They may commit a portion to memory.

6. They may write short papers on subjects connected with the speeches. Here are some topics.

Narrative of the Battle of Bunker Hill.

The services of Lafayette.

The original Monroe Doctrine.

The result of the French Revolution.

The French Revolution and American Politics.

Jay's Treaty.

The Articles of Confederation.

The Freeing of the South American States.

FAREWELL ADDRESS.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Friends, and Fellow-Citizens:

The period for the new election of a citizen, to administer the executive government[1] of the United States, being not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.[2]

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured, that this resolution has not been taken, without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country—and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness; but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped, that it would have been much earlier in my power,

[1] i. e. to serve as President.

[2] He had previously, on each occasion, been the only person really considered, and doubtless would have been so again.

consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement, from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations,[3] and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer [4] renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety; and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our country you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions, with which, I first undertook the arduous trust, were explained on the proper occasion.[5]—In the discharge of this trust, I will only say, that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious, in the outset, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience, in my own eyes perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and every day the increasing weight of years [6] admonishes me more and more that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied, that, if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe, that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

[3] See Introd. p. 10. [4] See Introd. p. 12.

[5] In his Inaugural Speech to Both Houses of Congress, April 30th, 1789. It was the old custom for the President, at the opening of each session of Congress, to meet the two Houses in person, and speak to them on the public questions which should claim their attention.

[6] Washington was now sixty-four years old.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country,—for the many honors it has conferred upon me; still more for the stedfast confidence with which it has supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead, amidst appearances somewhat dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism,[1] the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to the grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence, that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual, that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained, that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue, that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these states, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your

[1] There had been much very violent criticism of Washington during the eight years of his administration, all of which is now forgotten except by those who read history.

welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review,[8] some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsels. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government[9] which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquillity at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But, as it is easy to foresee that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth;—as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think

[8] Several of Washington's counsels have been constantly in the mind of the American people.

[9] It was to secure a more perfect union that the Articles of Confederation had been given up for the Constitution.

and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest.—Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections.—The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles.—You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole.

The *North*, in an unrestrained intercourse with the *South*, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise, and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The *South*, in the same intercourse benefiting by the agency of the *North*, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the *North*, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and, while it contributes,

in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength to which itself is unequally adapted. The *East*, in a like intercourse with the *West*, already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communications by land and water, will more and more find, a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad or manufactures at home.—The *West* derives from the *East* supplies requisite to its growth and comfort, and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of neeessity owe the *secure* enjoyment of indispensable *outlets* for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest, as *one nation*. Any other tenure by which the *West* can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.[10]

While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations, and, what is of inestimable value—they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighboring countries not tied together by the same government; which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence likewise they will avoid the necessity of

[10] The country has so grown, and commercial and industrial conditions have so changed, that these considerations are no longer entirely applicable. Yet the same divisions of the country exist to-day, though with some difference in the meaning of the names, and the common interest rising from their mutual interdependence is as strong as it was in the time of Washington.

those overgrown military establishments,[11] which under any form of government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty. In this sense it is, that your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit the continuance of the UNION as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. 'Tis well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to union, affecting all parts of our country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who in any quarter may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our union, it occurs as matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by *geographical* discriminations—*northern* and *southern*—*Atlantic* and *western*, when designing men may endeavor to excite a belief, that there is a real difference of local interests and views.

One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart-burnings which spring from these misrepresentations. They tend to render alien to each

[11] France and Germany to day, for instance, are forced to keep a million men under arms, to a great degree because they are two countries instead of one.

other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our western country [12] have lately had a useful lesson on this head. They have seen, in the negotiation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the treaty with Spain,[13] and in the universal satisfaction at that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the general government and in the Atlantic states unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi. They have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties—that with Great Britain and that with Spain—which secure to them everything they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay,[14] by the adoption of a constitution of government, better calculated than your former for an intimate union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation

[12] The settlements then being made in the country between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi.

[13] A treaty with Spain had been signed Oct. 27, 1795, which had been highly acceptable to the country: it stated the boundaries with Louisiana and gave the United States the right to navigate the Mississippi.

[14] The Articles of Confederation.

and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and alter their constitutions of government. But the constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force, to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party; often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community—and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Toward the preservation of your government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions—that experience is the surest standard, by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country—that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion: and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is indeed little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party,[15] generally.

[15] Washington by his political opinions, almost by necessity belonged to the Federalist party. That he was by no means a partisan, however, is clear enough from his choosing for a cabinet men of differing shades of political opinion, Jefferson and Randolph as well as Hamilton and Knox.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual: and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turn this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind, (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foments occasionally riot and insurrection; it opens the doors to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country, are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true, and in governments of a mon-

archical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose; and there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.[16]

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres; avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power,[17] by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern; some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let

[16] However wise these general considerations, the common opinion of the English-speaking peoples at least is to the effect that a two-party system tends to the best carrying out the principles of popular government. The evils of party are very great, but in the present state of human nature, some sort of party system would seem to be very necessary.

[17] The system by which different branches of the government were able to exercise a check upon the acts of the others was very much in the minds of the founders of our nation.

it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure—reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote then, as of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security,

cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible—avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it—avoiding likewise the accumulation of debts, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burthen which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should co-operate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payments of debts there must be revenue, that to have revenue there must be taxes, that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant, that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties) ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the Government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great[18] nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary ad-

[18] So it was in little more than half a century.

vantages, which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded; and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated.[19] The nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests.—The nation prompted by ill-will and resentment sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of nations has been the victim.

So likewise a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest[20] in cases where no real common interest exists,

[19] This passage was inspired by those who were enthusiastic in favoring France or England.

[20] Chiefly, the thought that the United States had a common interest with France.

and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained, and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld; and it gives to ambitious, corrupted or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity—gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practise the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! Such an attachment of a small or weak, towards a great and powerful nation, dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence,[21] I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens, the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy, to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a de-

[21] A consideration not unnatural in a time when the United States had but just ceased being part of a set of colonies that were often considered chiefly as elements in the political relations of England, France, and Spain.

fense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little *political* connection as possible.[22] So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships, or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest guided by justice shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation?

[22] The advice of Washington growing so naturally out of the political situation, helped create a state of things entirely different. The United States was for a century, owing to her isolated position and policy, an object of almost no political interest at all to foreign nations.

Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor or caprice?

'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances, with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it—for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand: neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing with powers so disposed—in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them—conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit; but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view that 'tis folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another, that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character, that by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors and yet of being reproached with ingrati-

tude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. 'Tis in allusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression [23] I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit; some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism, this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.

How far in the discharge of my official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you, and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April, 1793, is the index of my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice and by that of your representatives in both houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me, uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take, and was bound in duty and interest to take, a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend

[23] The experience of a century shows how seriously the nation took these words.

upon me, to maintain it, with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe, that according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, had been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without anything more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency, which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my couutry will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service, with an upright zeal, the fault of incompetent abilities [24] will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it, which is so natural

[24] It is a great testimony to the universal agreement as to the worth of Washington's character, that in the popular mind his errors and deficiencies, such as they were, have been absolutely forgotten.

to a man, who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government, the ever favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors, and dangers.

G° WASHINGTON.

UNITED STATES, *September 19th*, 1796.

FIRST BUNKER HILL ORATION.

This uncounted multitude before me and around[1] proves the feeling which the occasion[2] has excited. These thousands of human faces, glowing with sympathy and joy, and from the impulses of a common gratitude turned reverently to heaven in this spacious temple of the firmament, proclaim that the day, the place, and the purpose of our assembling have made a deep impression on our hearts.

If, indeed, there be anything in local association[3] fit to affect the mind of man, we need not strive to repress the emotions which agitate us here. We are among the sepulchres of our fathers. We are on ground distinguished by their valor, their constancy, and the shedding of their blood. We are here, not to fix an uncertain date in our annals, nor to draw into notice an obscure and unknown spot. If our humble purpose had never been conceived, if we ourselves had never been born, the 17th of June 1775, would have been a day on which all subsequent history would have poured its light, and the eminence where we stand a point of attraction to the eyes of successive generations. But we are Americans.[4] We live in what may be called the early age of this great continent; and we know that our posterity, through all time, are here to enjoy and suffer the allotments of humanity. We see before us a probable train of great events; we know that our own fortunes have been happily cast; and it is natural, therefore, that we should be moved

[1] This speech was delivered by Webster in a sort of natural amphitheater on the north side of Bunker Hill, to a very large gathering.

[2] The laying the corner-stone of the Monument.

[3] The feeling aroused by any special place.

[4] And therefore have a special interest.

by the contemplation of occurrences which have guided our destiny before many of us were born, and settled the condition in which we should pass that portion of our existence which God allows to men on earth.

We do not read even of the discovery of this continent, without feeling something of a personal interest in the event; without being reminded how much it has affected our own fortunes and our own existence. It would be still more unnatural for us, therefore, than for others, to contemplate with unaffected minds that interesting, I may say that most touching and pathetic scene, when the great discoverer of America stood on the deck of his shattered bark, the shades of night falling on the sea, yet no man sleeping;[5] tossed on the billows of an unknown ocean, yet the stronger billows of alternate hope and despair tossing his own troubled thoughts; extending forward his harassed frame, straining westward his anxious and eager eyes, till Heaven at last granted him a moment of rapture and ecstasy, in blessing his vision with the sight of the unknown world.

Nearer to our times, more closely connected with our fates, and therefore still more interesting to our feelings and affections, is the settlement of our own country by colonists from England. We cherish every memorial of these worthy ancestors; we celebrate their patience and fortitude; we admire their daring enterprise; we teach our children to venerate their piety; and we are justly proud of being descended from men who have set the world an example of founding civil institutions on the great and united principles

[5] Irving, in his life of Columbus, writes as follows:—"At sunset [on Oct. 11th 1492] they had stood again to the west, and were ploughing the waves at a rapid rate, the Pinta keeping the lead from her superior sailing. The greatest animation prevailed throughout the ship, not an eye was closed that night. As the evening darkened, Columbus took his station on the top of the castle or cabin on the high poop of his vessel, ranging his eye along the dusky horizon, and maintaining an intense and unremitting watch. About ten o'clock he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a great distance." I, 164. It was not till two the next morning that the signal of land was given from the Pinta.

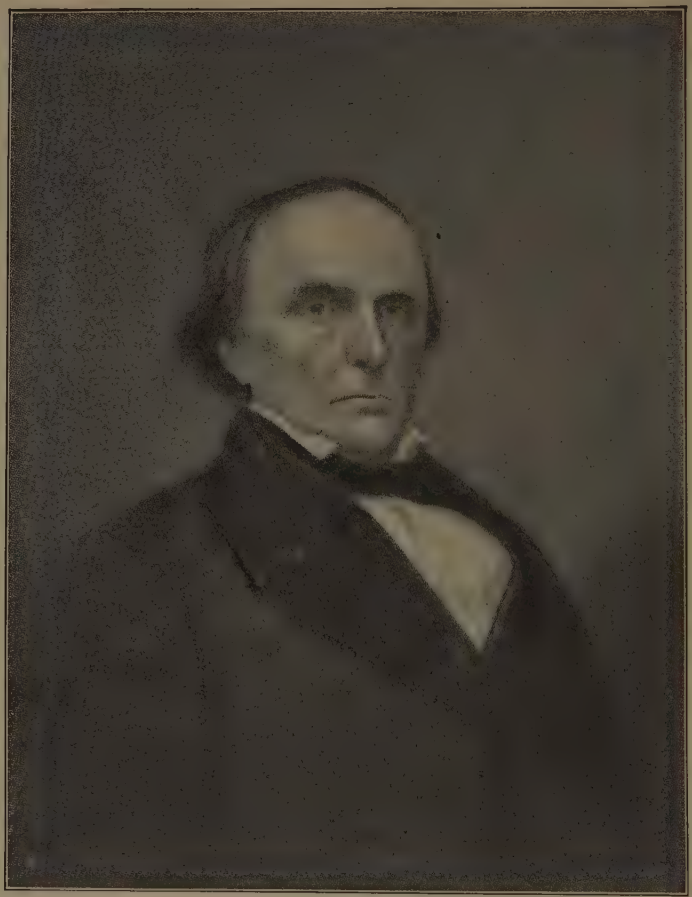
of human freedom and human knowledge. To us, their children, the story of their labors and sufferings can never be without interest. We shall not stand unmoved on the shore of Plymouth, while the sea continues to wash it; nor will our brethren in another early and ancient Colony [6] forget the place of its first establishment, till their river shall cease to flow by it. No vigor of youth, no maturity of manhood, will lead the nation to forget the spots where its infancy was cradled and defended.

But the great event in the history of the continent, which we are now met here to commemorate, that prodigy of modern times, at once the wonder and the blessing of the world, is the American Revolution. In a day of extraordinary prosperity and happiness, of high national honor, distinction, and power, we are brought together, in this place, by our love of country, by our admiration of exalted character, by our gratitude for signal services and patriotic devotion.

The Society whose organ I am [7] was formed for the purpose of rearing some honorable and durable monument to the memory of the early friends of American Independence. They have thought that for this object no time could be more propitious than the present prosperous and peaceful period; that no place could claim preference over this memorable spot; and that no day could be more auspicious to the undertaking than the anniversary of the battle which was here fought. The foundation of that monument we have now laid. With solemnities suited to the occasion, with prayers to Almighty God for his blessing, and in the midst of this cloud of witnesses, we have begun the work. We trust it will be prosecuted, and that, springing from a broad foundation, rising high in massive solidity and unadorned grandeur, it may remain as long as Heaven permits the works of

[6] The editions of Webster's works refer here to the settlement of Maryland, although it would otherwise seem that the reference was to Virginia. What would be "their river" in either case?

[7] Webster was at this time President of the Bunker Hill Association.



Daniel Webster

man to last, a fit emblem, both of the events in memory of which it is raised, and of the gratitude of those of those who have reared it.

We know, indeed, that the record of illustrious actions is most safely deposited in the universal remembrance of mankind. We know, that if we could cause this structure to ascend, not only till it reached the skies, but till it pierced them, its broad surfaces could still contain but part of that which, in an age of knowledge, hath already been spread over the earth, and which history charges itself with making known to all future times. We know that no inscription on entablatures less broad than the earth itself can carry information of the events we commemorate where it has not already gone; and that no structure, which shall not outlive the duration of letters and knowledge among men, can prolong the memorial. But our object is, by this edifice, to show our own deep sense of the value and importance of the achievements of our ancestors; and, by presenting this work of gratitude to the eye, to keep alive similar sentiments, and to foster a constant regard for the principles of the Revolution.[8] Human beings are composed, not of reason only, but of imagination also, and sentiment; and that is neither wasted nor misapplied which is appropriated to the purpose of giving right direction to sentiments, and opening proper springs of feeling in the heart. Let it not be supposed that our object is to perpetuate national hostility, or even to cherish a mere military spirit. It is higher, purer, nobler. We consecrate our work to the spirit of national independence, and we wish that the light of peace may rest upon it forever. We rear a memorial of our conviction of that unmeasured benefit which has been conferred on our own land, and of the happy influences which have been produced, by the same events, on the general interests of mankind. We come, as Americans, to mark a spot which must forever

[8] The monument will not be necessary as a record, but as a reminder.

be dear to us and our posterity. We wish that whosoever, in all coming time, shall turn his eye hither, may behold that the place is not undistinguished where the first great battle of the Revolution was fought. We wish that this structure may proclaim the magnitude and importance of that event to every class and every age. We wish that infancy may learn the purpose of its erection from maternal lips, and that weary and withered age may behold it, and be solaced by the recollections which it suggests. We wish that labor may look up here, and be proud, in the midst of its toil. We wish that, in those days of disaster, which, as they come upon all nations, must be expected to come upon us also, desponding patriotism may turn its eyes hitherward, and be assured that the foundations of our national power are still strong. We wish that this column, rising towards heaven among the pointed spires of so many temples dedicated to God, may contribute also to produce, in all minds, a pious feeling of dependence and gratitude. We wish, finally, that the last object to the sight of him who leaves his native shore, and the first to gladden him who revisits it, may be something which shall remind him of the liberty and the glory of his country. Let it rise! let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming; let the earliest light of the morning gild it, and parting day linger and play on its summit.

We live in a most extraordinary age. Events so various and so important that they might crowd and distinguish centuries are, in our times, compressed within the compass of a single life. When has it happened that history has had so much to record, in the same term of years, as since the 17th of June, 1775?[9] Our own revolution, which, under other circumstances, might itself have been expected to occasion a war of half a century, has been achieved; twenty-four sovereign and independent States erected; and a general government established over them, so safe so wise, so free,

[9] A period, it will be remembered, of half a century.

so practical, that we might well wonder its establishment should have been accomplished so soon, were it not far the greater wonder that it should have been established at all. Two or of three millions of people have been augmented to twelve, the great forests of the West prostrated beneath the arm of successful industry, and the dwellers on the banks of the Ohio and the Mississippi [10] become the fellow-citizens and neighbors of those who cultivate the hills of New England. We have a commerce that leaves no sea unexplored; navies which take no law from superior force; revenues adequate to all the exigencies of government, almost without taxation; and peace with all nations, founded on equal rights and mutual respect.

Europe, within the same period, has been agitated by a mighty revolution, which, while it has been felt in the individual condition and happiness of almost every man, has shaken to the center her political fabric, and dashed against one another thrones which had stood tranquil for ages.[11] On this, our continent, our own example has been followed, and colonies have sprung up to be nations.[12] Unaccustomed sounds of liberty and free government have reached us from beyond the track of the sun; and at this moment the dominion of European power in this continent, from the place where we stand to the south pole, is annihilated forever.[13]

In the mean time, both in Europe and America, such has been the general progress of knowledge, such the improvement in legislation, in commerce, in the arts, in letters, and, above all, in liberal ideas and the general spirit of the age, that the whole world seems changed.

[10] At the present day, more than eighty years after Webster spoke, the very same thing in essentials might be said, although the circumstances are different and indeed may appear to be even more remarkable. The twelve millions have become eighty millions: not merely the people on the Mississippi, but on the Pacific are neighbors of New England. But the general sentiment is still felt.

[11] The French Revolution and the career of Napoleon.

[12] The Central and South American Republics.

[13] Webster had in mind here the Monroe Doctrine, promulgated in 1823.

Yet, notwithstanding that this is but a faint abstract of the things which have happened since the day of the battle of Bunker Hill, we are but fifty years removed from it; and we now stand here to enjoy all the blessings of our own condition, and to look abroad on the brightened prospects of the world, while we still have among us some of those who were active agents in the scenes of 1775, and who are now here, from every quarter of New England, to visit once more, and under circumstances so affecting, I had almost said so overwhelming, this renowned theater of their courage and patriotism.

VENERABLE MEN![14] you have come down to us from a former generation. Heaven has bounteously lengthened out your lives, that you might behold this joyous day. You are now where you stood fifty years ago, this very hour, with your brothers and your neighbors, shoulder to shoulder, in the strife for your country. Behold, how altered! The same heavens are indeed over your heads; the same ocean rolls at your feet; but all else how changed! You hear now no roar of hostile cannon, you see no mixed volumes of smoke and flame rising from burning Charlestown. The ground strewed with the dead and the dying; the impetuous charge; the steady and successful repulse; the loud call to repeated assault; the summoning of all that is manly to repeated resistance; a thousand bosoms freely and fearlessly bared in an instant to whatever of terror there may be in war and death;—all these you have witnessed, but you witness them no more. All is peace. The heights of yonder metropolis, its towers and roofs, which you then saw filled with wives and children and countrymen in distress and terror, and looking with unutterable emotions for the issue of the combat, have presented you to-day with the sight of

[14] There were about two hundred survivors of the Revolutionary war present, of whom forty had fought at Bunker's Hill. It is these who are especially addressed here.

its whole happy population, come out to welcome and greet you with a universal jubilee. Yonder proud ships, by a felicity [15] of position appropriately lying at the foot of this mount, and seeming fondly to cling around it, are not means of annoyance to you, but your country's own means of distinction and defense. All is peace; and God has granted you this sight of your country's happiness, ere you slumber in the grave. He has allowed you to behold and to partake the reward of your patriotic toils; and he has allowed us, your sons and countrymen, to meet you here, and in the name of the present generation, in the name of your country, in the name of liberty to thank you!

But, alas! you are not all here! Time and the sword have thinned your ranks. Prescott, Putnam, Stark, Brooks, Read, Pomeroy, Bridge! [16] our eyes seek for you in vain amid this broken band. You are gathered to your fathers, and live only to your country in her grateful remembrance and your own bright example. But let us not too much grieve, that you have met the common fate of men. You lived as least long enough to know that your work had been nobly and successfully accomplished. You lived to see your country's independence established, and to sheathe your swords from war. On the light of Liberty you saw arise the light of Peace, like

> "another morn,
> Risen on mid-noon;"

and the sky on which you closed your eyes was cloudless.

[15] A happy chance. The reference is to the United States Navy Yard at Charlestown at the very base of Bunker Hill.

[16] Col. William Prescott was in chief command at the battle. Col. Israel Putnam, a man of experience in the colonial wars, had commanded the Connecticut levies Col. John Stark, who commanded a regiment, became more famous for his exploit at Bennington. John Brooks, an officer at the battle, was afterward Governor of Massachusetts and the first President of the Bunker Hill Association. Ebenezer Bridge was colonel of one of the Massachusetts regiments. Reed commanded New Hampshire troops, and Pomeroy, afterward General, was present as a volunteer.

But, ah! Him![17] the first great martyr in this great cause! Him! the premature victim of his own self-devoting heart! Him! the head of our civil councils, and the destined leader of our military bands, whom nothing brought hither but the unquenchable fire of his own spirit! Him! cut off by Providence in the hour of overwhelming anxiety and thick gloom; falling ere he saw the star of his country rise; pouring out his generous blood like water, before he knew whether it would fertilize a land of freedom or of bondage! —how shall I struggle with the emotions that stifle the utterance of thy name! Our poor work may perish; but thine shall endure! This monument may moulder away; the solid ground it rests upon may sink down to a level with the sea; but thy memory shall not fail! Wheresoever among men a heart shall be found that beats to the transports of patriotism and liberty, its aspirations shall be to claim kindred with thy spirit.

But the scene amid which we stand does not permit us to confine our thoughts or our sympathies to those fearless spirits who hazarded or lost their lives on this consecrated spot. We have the happiness to rejoice here in the presence of a most worthy representation of the survivors of the whole Revolutionary army.

Veterans![18] you are the remnant of many a well-fought field. You bring with you marks of honor from Trenton and Monmouth, from Yorktown, Camden, Bennington, and Saratoga.[19] Veterans of half a century! when in your youthful days you put everything at hazard in your country's cause, good as that cause was, and sanguine as youth is, still your fondest hopes did not stretch onward to an hour like

[17] Joseph Warren, President of the Continental Congress who fought as a volunteer, was killed as the Americans were leaving the intrenchments.

[18] Webster now turns to Revolutionary affairs in general.

[19] We need not tell in a note what these battles were. But every American who does not know should make haste to find out.

this! At a period to which you could not reasonably have expected to arrive, at a moment of national prosperity such as you could never have foreseen, you are now met here to enjoy the fellowship of old soldiers, and to receive the overflowings of a universal gratitude.

But your agitated countenances and your heaving breasts inform me that even this is not an unmixed joy. I perceive that a tumult of contending feelings rushes upon you. The images of the dead, as well as the persons of the living, present themselves before you. The scene overwhelms you, and I turn from it. May the Father of all mercies smile upon your declining years, and bless them! And when you shall here have exchanged your embraces, when you shall once more have pressed the hands which have been so often extended to give succor in adversity, or grasped in the exultation of victory, then look abroad upon this lovely land which your young valor defended, and mark the happiness with which it is filled; yea, look abroad upon the whole earth, and see what a name you have contributed to give to your country, and what a praise you have added to freedom, and then rejoice in the sympathy and gratitude which beam upon your last days from the improved condition of mankind!

The occasion does not require of me any particular account of the battle of the 17th of June, 1775, nor any detailed narrative of the events which immediately preceded it. These are familiarly known to all. In the progress of the great and interesting controversy, Massachusetts and the town of Boston had become early and marked objects of the displeasure of the British Parliament. This had been manifested in the act for altering the government of the Province, and in that for shutting up the port of Boston. Nothing sheds more honor on our early history, and nothing better shows how little the feelings and sentiments of the Colonies were known or regarded in England, than the im-

pression which these measures everywhere produced in America. It had been anticipated, that while the Colonies in general would be terrified by the severity of the punishment inflicted on Massachusetts, the other seaports would be governed by a mere spirit of gain; and that, as Boston was now cut off from all commerce, the unexpected advantage which this blow on her was calculated to confer on other towns would be greedily enjoyed. How miserably such reasoners deceived themselves! How little they knew of the depth, and the strength, and the intenseness of that feeling of resistance to illegal acts of power, which possessed the whole American people! Everywhere the unworthy boon was rejected with scorn. The fortunate occasion was seized, everywhere, to show to the whole world that the Colonies were swayed by no local interest, no partial interest, no selfish interest. The temptation to profit by the punishment of Boston was strongest to our neighbors of Salem. Yet Salem was precisely the place where this miserable proffer was spurned, in a tone of the most lofty self-respect and the most indignant patriotism. "We are deeply affected," said its inhabitants, "with the sense of our public calamities; but the miseries that are now rapidly hastening on our brethren in the capital of the Province greatly excite our commiseration. By shutting up the port of Boston some imagine that the course of trade might be turned hither and to our benefit; but we must be dead to every idea of justice, lost to all feelings of humanity, could we indulge a thought to seize on wealth and raise our fortunes on the ruin of our suffering neighbors." These noble sentiments were not confined to our immediate vicinity. In that day of general affection and brotherhood, the blow given to Boston smote on every patriotic heart from one end of the country to the other. Virginia and the Carolinas, as well as Connecticut and New Hampshire, felt and proclaimed the cause to be their own. The Continental Congress then holding its first

session in Philadelphia, expressed its sympathy for the suffering inhabitants of Boston, and addresses were received from all quarters, assuring them that the cause was a common one, and should be met by common efforts and common sacrifices. The Congress of Massachusetts responded to these assurances; and in an address to the Congress at Philadelphia, bearing the official signature, perhaps among the last, of the immortal Warren, notwithstanding the severity of its suffering and the magnitude of the dangers which threatened it, it was declared that this Colony "is ready, at all times, to spend and to be spent in the cause of America."

But the hour drew nigh which was to put professions to the proof, and to determine whether the authors of these mutual pledges were ready to seal them in blood. The tidings of Lexington and Concord had no sooner spread, than it was universally felt that the time was at last come for action. A spirit pervaded all ranks, not transient, not boisterous, but deep, solemn, determined,—

"Totamque infusa per artus
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet."[20]

War on their own soil and at their own doors, was, indeed, a strange work to the yeomanry of New England; but their consciences were convinced of its necessity, their country called them to it, and they did not withhold themselves from the perilous trial. The ordinary occupations of life were abandoned; the plough was stayed in the unfinished furrow; wives gave up their husbands, and mothers gave up their sons, to the battles of a civil war. Death might come in honor, on the field; it might come, in disgrace, on the scaffold. For either and for both they were prepared. The

[20] "And a mind infused through all the members gives life to the mass, and mingles with the whole body.

sentiment of Quincy [21] was full in their hearts. "Blandishments," said the distinguished son of genius and patriotism, "will not fascinate us, nor will threats of a halter intimidate; for, under God, we are determined, that, wheresoever, whensoever, or howsoever, we shall be called to make our exit, we will die free men."

The 17th of June saw the four New England Colonies standing here, side by side, to triumph or to fall together; and there was with them from that moment to the end of the war, what I hope will remain with them forever,—one cause, one country, one heart.

The battle of Bunker Hill was attended with the most important effects beyond its immediate results as a military engagement. It created at once a state of open, public war.[22] There could now be no longer a question of proceeding against individuals, as guilty of treason or rebellion. That fearful crisis was past.[23] The appeal lay to the sword, and the only question was, whether the spirit and the resources of the people would hold out till the object should be accomplished. Nor were its general consequences confined to our own country. The previous proceedings of the Colonies, their appeals, resolutions, and addresses, had made their cause known to Europe. Without boasting, we may say, that in no age or country has the public cause been maintained with more force of argument, more power of illustration, or more of that persuasion which excited feeling and elevated principle can alone bestow, than the Revolutionary state papers exhibit. These papers will forever deserve to be

[21] Josiah Quincy was one of the most distinguished of the earlier Massachusetts patriots. He died a few months only before the battle.

[22] Whatever had gone before might have been construed as the rebellious act of individuals. Burke speaks of it as "a situation which I scarcely know how to comprehend in the terms of any description." With the battle of Bunker Hill, however, it was clear that the colonies, as colonies, were in arms.

[23] Heretofore a man had acted against his lawful government. Now his own government, that of the colony, stood in arms.

studied, not only for the spirit which they breathe, but for the ability with which they were written.

To this able vindication of their cause, the Colonies had now added a practical and severe proof of their own true devotion to it, and given evidence also of the power which they could bring to its support. All now saw, that if America fell, she would not fall without a struggle. Men felt sympathy and regard, as well as surprise, when they beheld these infant states, remote, unknown, unaided, encounter the power of England, and, in the first considerable battle, leave more of their enemies dead on the field, in proportion to the number of combatants, than had been recently known to fall in the wars of Europe.

Information of these events, circulating throughout the world, at length reached the ears of one who now hears me.[24] He has not forgotten the emotion which the fame of Bunker Hill, and the name of Warren, excited in his youthful breast.

Sir, we are assembled to commemorate the establishment of great public principles of liberty, and to do honor to the distinguished dead. The occasion is too severe for eulogy of the living. But, Sir, your interesting relation to this country, the peculiar circumstances which surround you and surround us, call on me to express the happiness which we derive from your presence and aid in this solemn commemoration.

Fortunate, fortunate man! with what measure of devotion will you not thank God for the circumstances of your extraordinary life? You are connected with both hemispheres and with two generations. Heaven saw fit to ordain that the electric spark of liberty should be conducted, through you, from the New World to the Old;[25] and we, who are

[24] Gen. Lafayette had taken part in the ceremonies that preceded the speech. In what follows, Webster addresses him directly.

[25] Lafayette played a prominent part in the beginning of the French Revolution, but withdrew from public affairs when they got beyond his control.

now here to perform this duty of patriotism, have all of us long ago received it in charge from our fathers to cherish your name and your virtues. You will account it an instance of your good fortune, Sir, that you crossed the seas to visit us at a time which enables you to be present at this solemnity. You now behold the field, the renown of which reached you in the heart of France, and caused a thrill in your ardent bosom. You see the lines of the little redoubt thrown up by the incredible diligence of Prescott; defended, to the last extremity, by his lion-hearted valor; and within which the corner-stone of our monument has now taken its position. You see where Warren fell, and where Parker, Gardner, McCleary, Moore, and other early patriots fell with him. Those who survived that day, and whose lives have been prolonged to the present hour, are now around you. Some of them you have known in the trying scenes of the war. Behold! they now stretch forth their feeble arms to embrace you. Behold! they raise their trembling voices to invoke the blessing of God on you and yours forever.

Sir, you have assisted us in laying the foundation of this structure. You have heard us rehearse, with our feeble commendation, the names of departed patriots. Monuments and eulogy belong to the dead. We give then this day to Warren and his associates. On other occasions they have been given to your more immediate companions in arms, to Washington, to Greene, to Gates, to Sullivan, and to Lincoln.[28] We have become reluctant to grant these, our highest and last honors, further. We would gladly hold them yet back from the little remnant of that immortal band. "*Serus in cœlum redeas.*"[29] Illustrious as are your merits, yet far, O, very far distant be the day, when any inscription shall bear your name, or any tongue pronounce its eulogy!

[28] These distinguished generals were, at the time of speaking, all dead. Webster hopes that it will be long before Lafayette joins them.

[29] "May you return late to the heavens."

The leading reflection to which this occasion seems to invite us, respects the great changes which have happened in the fifty years since the battle of Bunker Hill was fought.[30] And it peculiarly marks the character of the present age, that, in looking at these changes, and in estimating their effect on our condition, we are obliged to consider, not what has been done in our country only, but in others also. In these interesting times while nations are making separate and individual advances in improvement, they make, too, a common progress; like vessels on a common tide, propelled by the gales at different rates, according to their several structure and management, but all moved forward by one mighty current, strong enough to bear onward whatever does not sink beneath it.

A chief distinction of the present day is a community of opinions and knowledge amongst men in different nations, existing in a degree heretofore unknown. Knowledge has, in our time, triumphed, and is triumphing, over distance, over difference of languages, over diversity of habits, over prejudice, and over bigotry. The civilized and Christian world is fast learning the great lesson, that difference of nation does not implied necessary hostility, and that all contact need not be war. The whole world is becoming a common field for intellect to act in. Energy of mind, genius, power, wheresoever it exists, may speak out in any tongue, and the world will hear it. A great chord of sentiment and feeling runs through two continents, and vibrates over both. Every breeze wafts intelligence from country to country, every wave rolls it; all give it forth, and all in turn receive it. There is a vast commerce of ideas; there are marts and exchanges for intellectual discoveries, and a wonderful fellowship of those individual intelligences which make up the mind and opinion of the age.

[30] From the immediate subject of the battle Webster now turns to more general considerations arising from it.

Mind is the great lever of all things; human thought is the process by which human ends are are ultimately answered; the diffusion of knowledge, so astonishing in the last half-century, has rendered innumerable minds, variously gifted by nature, competent to be competitors or fellow-workers on the theater of intellectual operation.

From these causes important improvements have taken place in the personal condition of individuals. Generally speaking, mankind are not only better fed and better clothed, but they are able also to enjoy more leisure; they possess more refinement and more self-respect. A superior tone of education, manners, and habits prevails. This remark, most true in its application to our own country, is also partly true when applied elsewhere. It is proved by the vastly augmented consumption of those articles of manufacture and of commerce which contribute to the comforts and the decencies of life; an augmentation which has far outrun the progress of population. And while the unexampled and almost incredible use of machinery would seem to supply the place of labor, labor still finds its occupation and its reward;[31] so wisely has Providence adjusted men's wants and desires to their condition and their capacity.

Any adequate survey, however, of the progress made during the last half-century in the polite and the mechanic arts, in machinery and manufactures, in commerce and agriculture, in letters and in science, would require volumes. I must abstain wholly from these subjects, and turn for a moment to the contemplation of what has been done on the great question of politics and government. This is the master topic of the age; and during the whole fifty years it has intensely occupied the thoughts of men. The nature of civil government, its ends and uses, have been canvassed

[31] These were the days in which the applications of machinery were but beginning: many people thought that it would make less work for the workers. But theory showed and experience shows that it really employs more men, and that more usefully, than when men worked with the hands alone.

and investigated; ancient opinions attacked and defended; new ideas recommended and resisted, by whatever power the mind of man could bring to the controversy. From the closet and the public halls the debate has been transferred to the field; and the world has been shaken by wars of unexampled magnitude, and the greatest variety of fortune.[32] A day of peace has at length succeeded; and now that the strife has subsided, and the smoke cleared away, we may begin to see what has actually been done, permanently changing the state and condition of human society. And, without dwelling on particular circumstances, it is most apparent, that, from the before-mentioned causes of augmented knowledge and improved individual condition, a real, substantial, and important change has taken place, and is taking place, highly favorable, on the whole, to human liberty and human happiness.

The great wheel of political revolution began to move in America. Here its rotation was guarded, regular, and safe. Transferred to the other continent, from unfortunate but natural causes, it received an irregular and violent impulse; it whirled along with a fearful celerity; till at length, like the chariot-wheels in the races of antiquity, it took fire from the rapidity of its own motion, and blazed onward, spreading conflagration and terror around.[33]

We learn from the result of this experiment, how fortunate was our own condition, and how admirably the character of our people was calculated for setting the great example of popular governments. The possession of power did not turn the heads of the American people, for they had long been in the habit of exercising a great degree of self-control. Although the paramount authority of the parent state ex-

[32] The American and French revolutions had been followed by the wars of Napoleon, the War of 1812, and the wars which accompanied the freeing of the Spanish American States.

[33] The French Revolution had ended in the absolute government of Napoleon. When he fell, people were willing to go back to the Bourbons.

isted over them, yet a large field of legislation had always been open to our Colonial assemblies. They were accustomed to representative bodies and the forms of free government; they understood the doctrine of the division of power among different branches, and the necessity of checks on each. The character of our countrymen, moreover, was sober, moral, and religious; and there was little in the change to shock their feelings of justice and humanity, or even to disturb an honest prejudice. We had no domestic throne to overturn, no privileged orders to cast down, no violent changes of property to encounter. In the American Revolution, no man sought or wished for more than to defend and enjoy his own. None hoped for plunder or for spoil. Rapacity was unknown to it; the axe was not among the instruments of its accomplishment; and we all know that it could not have lived a single day under any well-founded imputation of possessing a tendency adverse to the Christian religion.[34]

It need not surprise us, that, under circumstances less auspicious, political revolutions elsewhere, even when well intended, have terminated differently. It is, indeed, a great achievement, it is the masterwork of the world, to establish governments entirely popular on lasting foundations; nor is it easy, indeed, to introduce the popular principle at all into governments to which it has been altogether a stranger. It cannot be doubted, however, that Europe has come out of the contest, in which she has been so long engaged, with greatly superior knowledge, and in many respects, in a highly improved condition.[35] Whatever benefit has been acquired is likely to be retained, for its consists mainly in the acquisition of more enlightened ideas. And although kingdoms and provinces may be wrested from the hands

[34] As is well known, the Christian religion was abolished in the course of the French Revolution.

[35] The history of the 19th century in Europe has shown in every country, a great current running toward democracy.

that hold them, in the same manner they were obtained; although ordinary and vulgar power may, in human affairs, be lost as it has been won; yet it is the glorious prerogative of the empire of knowledge, that what it gains it never loses. On the contrary, it increases by the multiple of its own power; all its ends become means; all its attainments, helps to new conquests. Its whole abundant harvest is but so much seed wheat, and nothing has limited, and nothing can limit, the amount of ultimate product.

Under the influence of this rapidly increasing knowledge, the people have begun, in all forms of government, to think, and to reason, on affairs of state. Regarding government as an institution for the public good, they demand a knowledge of its operations, and a participation in its exercise. A call for the representative system, wherever it is not enjoyed, and were there is already intelligence enough to estimate its value, is perseveringly made.[36] Where men may speak out, they demand it; where the bayonet is at their throats, they pray for it.

When Louis the Fourteenth said, "I am the State," he expressed the essence of the doctrine of unlimited power. By the rules of that system, the people are disconnected from the state; they are its subjects, it is their lord. These ideas, founded in the love of power, and long supported by the excess and the abuse of it, are yielding, in our age, to other opinions; and the civilized world seems at last to be proceeding to the conviction of that fundamental and manifest truth, that the powers of government are but a trust, and that they cannot be lawfully exercised but for the good of the community. As knowledge is more and more extended, this conviction becomes more and more general. Knowledge, in truth, is the great sun in the firmament. Life and power are scattered with all its beams. The prayer of the Grecian champion, when enveloped in unnatural clouds

[36] It is coming at the present day, even in Russia.

and darkness, is the appropriate political supplication for the people of every country not yet blessed with free institutions:—

> "Dispel this cloud, the light of heaven restore,
> Give me TO SEE,—and Ajax asks no more."[37]

We may hope that the growing influence of enlightened sentiment will promote the permanent peace of the world. Wars to maintain family alliances, to uphold or to cast down dynasties, and to regulate successions to thrones, which have occupied so much room in the history of modern times, if not less likely to happen at all, will be less likely to become general and involve many nations, as the great principle shall be more and more established, that the interest of the world is peace, and its first great statute, that every nation possesses the power of establishing a government for itself. But public opinion has attained also an influence over governments which do not admit the popular principle into their organization. A necessary respect for the judgment of the world operates, in some measure, as a control over the most unlimited forms of authority. It is owing, perhaps, to this truth, that the interesting struggle of the Greeks has been suffered to go on so long, without a direct interference, either to wrest that country from its present masters, or to execute the system of pacification by force; and, with united strength, lay the neck of Christian and civilized Greek at the foot of the barbarian Turk.[38] Let us thank God that we live in an age when something has influence besides the bayonet, and when the sternest authority does not venture to encounter the scorching power of public reproach. Any attempt of the kind I have mentioned should be met by one universal burst of indignation; the air of the civilized world ought to

[37] The quotation is from Pope's translation of the Iliad. In the midst of battle both sides had been wrapped in darkness.

[38] The Greek war of independence, which had broken out in 1821, did not come to a conclusion till four years after this speech.

be made too warm to be comfortably breathed by any one who would hazard it.

It is, indeed, a touching reflection, that, while, in the fulness of our country's happiness, we rear this monument to her honor, we look for instruction[39] in our undertaking to a country which is now in fearful contest, not for works of art or memorials of glory, but for her own existence. Let her be assured, that she is not forgotten in the world; that her efforts are applauded, and that constant prayers ascend for her success. And let us cherish a confident hope for her final triumph. If the true spark of religious and civil liberty be kindled, it will burn. Human agency cannot extinguish it. Like the earth's central fire, it may be smothered for a time; the ocean may overwhelm it; mountains may press it down; but its inherent and unconquerable force will heave both the ocean and the land, and at some time or other, in some place or other, the volcano will break out and flame up to heaven.

Among the great events of the half-century, we must reckon, certainly, the revolution of South America;[40] and we are not likely to overrate the importance of that revolution, either to the people of the country itself or to the rest of the world. The late Spanish colonies, now independent states, under circumstances less favorable, doubtless, than attended our own revolution, have yet successfully commenced their national existence. They have accomplished the great object of establishing their independence; they are known and acknowledged in the world; and although in regard to their systems of government, their sentiments on religious toleration, and their provision for public instruction, they may have yet much to learn, it must be admitted that

[39] The first democracies were those of the Greek cities.

[40] The revolution of the Spanish American colonies had begun in 1810 and in twelve years the countries now called Venezuela, Colombia, Equador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, were free republics.

they have risen to the condition of settled and established states more rapidly than could have been reasonably anticipated. They already furnish an exhilarating example of the difference between free governments and despotic misrule. Their commerce, at this moment, creates a new activity in all the great marts of the world. They show themselves able, by an exchange of commodities, to bear a useful part in the intercourse of nations.

A new spirit of enterprise and industry begins to prevail; all the great interests of society receive a salutary impulse; and the progress of information not only testifies to an improved condition, but itself constitutes the highest and most essential improvement.

When the battle of Bunker Hill was fought, the existence of South America was scarcely felt in the civilized world. The thirteen little colonies of North America habitually called themselves the "continent."[41] Borne down by colonial subjugation, monopoly, and bigotry, these vast regions of the South were hardly visible above the horizon. But in our day there has been, as it were, a new creation. The southern hemisphere emerges from the sea. Its lofty mountains begin to lift themselves into the light of heaven; its broad and fertile plains stretch out, in beauty, to the eye of civilized man, and at the mighty bidding of the voice of political liberty the waters of darkness retire.

And now, let us indulge an honest exultation in the conviction of the benefit which the example of our country has produced, and is likely to produce, on human freedom and human happiness. Let us endeavor to comprehend in all its magnitude, and to feel in all its importance, the part assigned to us in the great drama of human affairs. We are placed at the head of the system of representative and popular governments. Thus far our example shows that such governments are compatible, not only with respectability

[41] As distinct from the West Indies. Hence the name "Continental" Congress.

and power, but with repose, with peace, with security of personal rights, with good laws, and a just administration.

We are not propagandists.[42] Wherever other systems are preferred, either as being thought better in themselves, or as better suited to existing conditions, we leave the preference to be enjoyed. Our history hitherto proves, however, that the popular form is practicable, and that with wisdom and knowledge men may govern themselves; and the duty incumbent on us is to preserve the consistency of this cheering example, and take care that nothing may weaken its authority with the world. If, in our case, the representative system ultimately fail, popular governments must be pronounced impossible. No combination of circumstances more favorable to the experiment can ever be expected to occur. The last hopes of mankind, therefore, rest with us; and if it should be proclaimed, that our example had become an argument against the experiment, the knell of popular liberty would be sounded throughout the earth.

These are incitements to duty; but they are not suggestions of doubt. Our history and our condition, all that is gone before us, and all that surrounds us, authorize the belief, that popular governments, though subject to occasional variations, in form perhaps not always for the better, may yet, in their general character, be as durable and permanent as other systems. We know, indeed, that in our country any other is impossible. The principle of free governments adheres to the American soil. It is bedded in it, immovable as its mountains.

And let the sacred obligations which have devolved on this generation, and on us, sink deep into our hearts. Those who established our liberty and our government are daily dropping from among us. The great trust now descends to new hands. Let us apply ourselves to that which

[42] The French had desired to revolutionize all Europe by force. Webster would leave the real power of true political ideas to make a way for themselves.

is presented to us, as our appropriate object. We can win no laurels in a war for independence. Earlier and worthier hands have gathered them all. Nor are there places for us by the side of Solon, and Alfred,[43] and other founders of states. Our fathers have filled them. But there remains to us a great duty of defense and preservation; and there is opened to us, also, a noble pursuit, to which the spirit of the times strongly invites us. Our proper[44] business is improvement. Let our age be the age of improvement. In a day of peace, let us advance the arts of peace and the works of peace. Let us develop the resources of our land, call forth its powers, build up its institutions, promote all its great interests, and see whether we also, in our day and generation, may not perform something worthy to be remembered. Let us cultivate a true spirit of union and harmony. In pursuing the great objects which our condition points to us, let us act under a settled conviction, and an habitual feeling, that these twenty-four States are one country. Let our conceptions be enlarged to the circle of our duties. Let us extend our ideas over the whole of the vast field in which we are called to act. Let our object be, OUR COUNTRY, OUR WHOLE COUNTRY, AND NOTHING BUT OUR COUNTRY. And, by the blessing of God, may that country itself become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of Wisdom, of Peace, and of Liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration forever!

[43] The representative figures of ancient Greece and ancient England.
[44] Belonging especially to us.

SECOND BUNKER HILL ORATION.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

A DUTY has been performed. A work of gratitude and patriotism is completed. This structure, having its foundations in soil which drank deep of early Revolutionary blood, has at length reached its destined height, and now lifts its summit to the skies.

We have assembled to celebrate the accomplishment of this undertaking, and to indulge afresh in the recollection of the great event which it is designed to commemorate. Eighteen years, more than half the ordinary duration of a generation of mankind, have elapsed since the corner-stone of this monument was laid. The hopes of its projectors rested on voluntary contributions, private munificence, and the general favor of the public. These hopes have not been disappointed. Donations have been made by individuals, in some cases of large amount; and smaller sums have been contributed by thousands. All who regard the object itself as important, and its accomplishment, therefore, as a good attained, will entertain sincere respect and gratitude for the unwearied efforts of the successive presidents, boards of directors, and committees of the Association which has had the general control of the work. The architect, equally entitled to our thanks and commendation, will find other reward, also, for his labor and skill, in the beauty and elegance of the obelisk itself, and the distinction which, as a work of art, it confers upon him.

At a period when the prospects of further progress in the undertaking were gloomy and discouraging, the Mechanic

Association, by a most praiseworthy and vigorous effort, raised new funds for carrying it forward, and saw them applied with fidelity, economy, and skill. It is a grateful duty to make public acknowledgments of such timely and efficient aid.

The last effort and the last contribution were from a different source. Garlands of grace and elegance were destined to crown a work which had its commencement in manly patriotism. The winning power of the sex addressed itself to the public, and all that was needed to carry the monument to its proposed height, and to give to it its finish, was promptly supplied. The mothers and the daughters of the land contributed thus, most successfully, to whatever there is of beauty in the monument itself, or whatever of utility and public benefit and gratification there is in its completion.

Of those with whom the plan originated, of erecting on this spot a monument worthy of the event to be commemorated, many are now present; but others, alas! have themselves become subjects of monumental inscription. William Tudor—an accomplished scholar, a distinguished writer, a most amiable man, allied both by birth and sentiment to the patriots of the Revolution—died while on public service abroad, and now lies buried in a foreign land. William Sullivan—a name fragrant of Revolutionary merit and of public virtue, who himself partook in a high degree of the respect and confidence of the community, and yet was always most loved where best known—has also been gathered to his fathers. And last, George Blake—a lawyer of learning and eloquence, a man of wit and of talent, of social qualities the most agreeable and fascinating, and of gifts which enabled him to exercise large sway over public assemblies—has closed his human career.[1] I know that in the crowds before

[1] Of these gentlemen William Tudor had died in 1830, while attached to the United States Legation at Rio de Janeiro. William Sullivan died in 1839, George Blake in 1841: The last two were lawyers and all three men of great consideration in Boston.

me there are those from whose eyes tears will flow at the mention of these names. But such mention is due to their general character, their public and private virtues, and especially, on this occasion, to the spirit and zeal with which they entered into the undertaking which is now completed.

I have spoken only of those who are no longer numbered with the living. But a long life, now drawing towards its close, always distinguished by acts of public spirit, humanity, and charity, forming a character which has already become historical, and sanctified by public regard and the affection of friends, may confer even on the living the proper immunity of the dead, and be the fit subject of honorable mention and warm commendation. Of the early projectors of the design of this monument, one of the most prominent the most zealous, and the most efficient, is Thomas H. Perkins.[2] It was beneath his ever hospitable roof that those whom I have mentioned, and others yet living and now present, having assembled for the purpose, adopted the step towards erecting a monument on Bunker Hill. Long may he remain, with unimpaired faculties, in the wide field of his usefulness! His charities have distilled like the dews of heaven; he has fed the hungry, and clothed the naked; he has given to the blind: and for such virtues there is a reward on high of which all human memorials, all language of brass and stone, are but humble types and attempted imitations.

Time and nature have had their course in diminishing the number of those whom we met here on the 17th of June, 1825. Most of the Revolutionary characters then present have since deceased; and Lafayette sleeps in his native land. Yet the name and blood of Warren are with us; the kindred

[2] Thomas Handasyd Perkins, a distinguished merchant and philanthropist of Boston, founder of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind. He died Jan. 11, 1854.

of Putnam are also here; and near me, universally beloved for his character and his virtues, and now venerable for his years, sits the son of the noble-hearted and daring Prescott.[3] Gideon Foster of Danvers, Enos Reynolds of Boxford, Phineas Johnson, Robert Andrews, Elijah Dresser, Josiah Cleaveland, Jesse Smith, Philip Bagley, Needham Maynard, Roger Plaisted, Joseph Stephens, Nehemiah Porter, and James Harvey, who bore arms for their country, either at Concord and Lexington on the 19th of April, or on Bunker Hill, all now far advanced in age, have come here to-day to look once more on the field where their valor was proved, and to receive a hearty outpouring of our respect.

They have long outlived the troubles and dangers of the Revolution; they have outlived the evils arising from the want of a united and efficient government; they have outlived the menace of imminent dangers to the public liberty; they have outlived nearly all their contemporaries: but they have not outlived, they cannot outlive, the affectionate gratitude of their country. Heaven has not allotted to this generation an opportunity of rendering high services, and manifesting strong personal devotion, such as they rendered and manifested, and in such a cause as that which roused the patriotic fires of their youthful breasts, and nerved the strength of their arms. But we may praise what we cannot equal, and celebrate actions which we were not born to perform. *Pulchrum est benefacere reipublicæ, etiam benedicere haud absurdum est.*[4]

The Bunker Hill Monument is finished. Here it stands. Fortunate in the high natural eminence on which it is placed, higher, infinitely higher, in its objects and purpose, it rises over the land and over the sea; and, visible at their homes to three hundred thousand of the people of

[3] See p. 53, note 16.

[4] "It is a fine thing to do well in the service of the commonwealth, and even to speak well of her is not without value."

Massachusetts, it stands a memorial of the last, and a monitor to the present, and to all succeeding generations. I have spoken of the loftiness of its purpose. If it had been without any other design than the creation of a work of art, the granite of which it is composed would have slept in its native bed. It has a purpose, and that purpose gives it its character. That purpose enrobes it with dignity and moral grandeur. That well-known purpose it is which causes us to look up to it with a feeling of awe. It is itself the orator of this occasion. It is not from my lips, it could not be from any human lips, that that strain of eloquence is this day to flow most competent to move and excite the vast multitudes around me. The powerful speaker stands motionless before us. It is a plain shaft. It bears no inscriptions, fronting to the rising sun, from which the future antiquary shall wipe the dust. Nor does the rising sun cause tones of music to issue from its summit. But at the rising of the sun and at the setting of the sun, in the blaze of noonday, and beneath the milder effulgence of lunar light, it looks, it speaks, it acts, to the full comprehension of every American mind, and the awakening of glowing enthusiasm in every American heart. Its silent but awful utterance; its deep pathos as it brings to our contemplation the 17th of June, 1775, and the consequences which have resulted to us, to our country, and to the world, from the events of that day, and which we know must continue to rain influence on the destinies of mankind to the end of time; the elevation with which it raises us high above the ordinary feelings of life,—surpass all that the study of the closet, or even the inspiration of genius, can produce. To-day it speaks to us: its future auditories will be the successive generations of men as they rise up before it and gather around it. Its speech will be of patriotism and courage, of civil and religious liberty, of free government, of the moral improvement and elevation of mankind, and of the immortal memory of

those who, with heroic devotion, have sacrificed their lives for their country.

In the older world, numerous fabrics still exist, reared by human hands, but whose object has been lost in the darkness of ages. They are now monuments of nothing but the labor and skill which constructed them.

The mighty Pyramid itself, half buried in the sands of Africa, has nothing to bring down and report to us but the power of kings and the servitude of the people. If it had any purpose beyond that of a mausoleum, such purpose has perished from history and from tradition. If asked for its moral object, its admonition, its sentiment, its instruction to mankind, or any high end in its erection, it is silent,—silent as the millions which lie in the dust at its base, and in the catacombs which surround it. Without a just moral object therefore, made known to man, though raised against the skies, it excites only conviction of power mixed with strange wonder. But if the civilization of the present race of men —founded as it is in solid science, the true knowledge of nature, and vast discoveries in art, and which is elevated and purified by moral sentiment and by the truths of Christianity —be not destined to destruction before the final termination of human existence on earth, the object and purpose of this edifice will be known till that hour shall come. And even if civilization should be subverted, and the truths of the Christian religion obscured by a new deluge of barbarism, the memory of Bunker Hill and the American Revolution will still be elements and parts of the knowledge which shall be possessed by the last man to whom the light of civilization and Christianity shall be extended.

This celebration is honored by the presence of the chief executive magistrate of the Union.[5] An occasion so national in its object and character, and so much connected with that

[5] President Tyler. The fact that he was a Virginian suggests to Webster the contrast between Bunker Hill and Yorktown.

Revolution from which the government sprang at the head of which he is placed, may well receive from him this mark of attention and respect. Well acquainted with Yorktown, the scene of the last great military struggle of the Revolution, his eye now surveys the field of Bunker Hill, the theater of the first important conflicts. He sees where Warren fell, where Putnam and Prescott and Stark and Knowlton and Brooks fought. He beholds the spot where a thousand trained soldiers of England were smitten to the earth, in the first effort of revolutionary war, by the arm of a bold and determined yeomanry contending for liberty and their country. And while all assembled here entertain towards him sincere personal good wishes and the high respect due to his elevated office and station, it is not to be doubted that he enters with true American feeling into the patriotic enthusiasm kindled by the occasion which animates the multitudes that surround him.

His Excellency the Governor of the Commonwealth, the Governor of Rhode Island, and the other distinguished public men whom we have the honor to receive as visitors and guests to-day, will cordially unite in a celebration connected with the great event of the Revolutionary War.

No name in the history of 1775 and 1776 is more distinguished than that borne by an ex-president of the United States, whom [6] we expected to see here, but whose ill health prevents his attendance. Whenever popular rights were to be asserted, an Adams was present; and when the time came for the formal Declaration of Independence, it was the voice of an Adams that shook the halls of Congress. We wish we could have welcomed to us this day the inheritor of Revolutionary blood, and the just and worthy representatives of high Revolutionary names, merit, and services.

Banners and badges, processions and flags, announce to us

[6] John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), the sixth President of the United States (1825-29).

that amidst this uncounted throng are thousands of natives of New England now residents in other States. Welcome, ye kindred names, with kindred blood! From the broad savannas [7] of the South, from the newer regions of the West, from amidst the hundreds of thousands of men of Eastern origin who cultivate the rich valley of the Genesee, or live along the chain of the Lakes, from the mountains of Pennsylvania, and from the thronged cities of the coast, welcome, welcome! Wherever else you may be strangers, here you are all at home. You assemble at this shrine of liberty, near the family altars at which your earliest devotions were paid to Heaven, near to the temples of worship first entered by you, and near to the schools and colleges in which your education was received. You come hither with a glorious ancestry of liberty. You bring names which are on the rolls of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. You come, some of you, once more to be embraced by an aged Revolutionary father, or to receive another, perhaps a last, blessing, bestowed in love and tears, by a mother, yet surviving to witness and to enjoy your prosperity and happiness.

But if family associations and the recollections of the past bring you hither with greater alacrity, and mingle with your greeting much of local attachment and private affection, greeting also be given, free and hearty greeting, to every American citizen who treads this sacred soil with patriotic feeling, and respires with pleasure in an atmosphere perfumed with the recollections of 1775! This occasion is respectable, nay, it is grand, it is sublime, by the nationality of its sentiment. Among the seventeen millions of happy people who form the American community, there is not one who has not an interest in this monument; as there is not one that has not a deep and abiding interest in that which it commemorates.

[7] Great plains: the word was commonly used of the South, as *prairie* of the West.

Woe betide the man who brings to this day's worship feeling less than wholly American! Woe betide the man who can stand here with the fires of local resentments burning, or the purpose of fomenting local jealousies and the strifes of local interests festering and rankling in his heart! Union, established in justice, in patriotism, and the most plain and obvious common interest; union, founded on the same love of liberty, cemented by blood shed in the same common cause,—union has been the source of all our glory and greatness thus far, and is the ground of all our highest hopes. This column stands on union.[8] I know not that it might not keep its position if the American Union, in the mad conflict of human passions, and in the strife of parties and factions, should be broken up and destroyed. I know not that it would totter and fall to the earth, and mingle its fragments with the fragments of Liberty and the Constitution, when State should be separated from State, and faction and dismemberment obliterate forever all the hopes of the founders of our Republic and the great inheritance of their children. It might stand. But who, from beneath the weight of mortification and shame that would oppress him, could look up to behold it? Whose eyeballs would not be seared by such a spectacle? For my part, should I live to such a time, I shall avert my eyes from it forever.

It is not as a mere military encounter of hostile armies that the battle of Bunker Hill presents its principal claim to attention. Yet, even as a mere battle, there were circumstances attending it extraordinary in character, and entitling it to peculiar distinction. It was fought on this eminence, in the neighborhood of yonder city, in the presence of many more spectators than there were combatants in the conflict. Men, women, and children, from every commanding position, were gazing at the battle, and looking for its results

[8] Cf. the end of the first oration, p. 70. Webster was first and foremost the advocate of union; all else was of secondary import.

with all the eagerness natural to those who knew that the issue was fraught with the deepest consequences to themselves personally, as well as to their country. Yet on the 16th of June, 1775, there was nothing around this hill but verdure and culture. There was, indeed, the note of awful preparation in Boston. There was the Provincial army at Cambridge, with its right flank resting on Dorchester, and its left on Chelsea. But here all was peace. Tranquillity reigned around. On the 17th, everything was changed. On this eminence had arisen, in the night, a redoubt, built by Prescott, and in which he held command. Perceived by the enemy at dawn, it was immediately cannonaded from the floating batteries in the river, and from the opposite shore. And then ensued the hurried movement in Boston, and soon the troops of Britain embarked in the attempt to dislodge the colonists. In an hour everything indicated an immediate and bloody conflict. Love of liberty on one side, proud defiance of rebellion on the other, hopes and fears, and courage and daring, on both sides, animated the hearts of the combatants as they hung on the edge of battle.

I suppose it would be difficult, in a military point of view, to ascribe to the leaders on either side any just motive for the engagement which followed. On the one hand, it could not have been very important to the Americans to attempt to hem the British within the town, by advancing one single post a quarter of a mile; while, on the other hand, if the British found it essential to dislodge the American troops, they had it in their power at no expense of life. By moving up their ships and batteries, they could have completely cut off all communication with the mainland over the Neck, and the forces in the redoubt would have been reduced to a state of famine in forty-eight hours.

But that was not the day for any such consideration on either side. Both parties were anxious to try the strength of their arms. The pride of England would not permit the

"rebels," as she termed them, to defy her to the teeth; and without for a moment calculating the cost, the British general determined to destroy the fort immediately. On the other side, Prescott and his gallant followers longed and thirsted for a decisive trial of strength and of courage. They wished a battle, and wished it at once. And this is the true secret of the movements on this hill.

I will not attempt to describe that battle. The cannonading, the landing of the British, their advance, the coolness with which the charge was met, the repulse, the second attack, the second repulse, the burning of Charlestown, and finally the closing assault and the slow retreat of the Americans,—the history of all these is familiar.

But the consequences of the battle of Bunker Hill were greater than those of any ordinary conflict, although between armies of far greater force, and terminating with more immediate advantage on the one side or the other. It was the first great battle of the Revolution, and not only the first blow, but the blow which determined the contest. It did not, indeed, put an end to the war; but, in the then existing hostile state of feeling, the difficulties could only be referred to the arbitration of the sword.[9] And one thing is certain,—that, after the New-England troops had shown themselves able to face and repulse the regulars, it was decided that peace never could be established but upon the basis of the independence of the Colonies. When the sun of that day went down, the event of independence was no longer doubtful. In a few days Washington heard of the battle, and he inquired if the militia had stood the fire of the regulars. When told that they had not only stood that fire, but reserved their own till the enemy was within eight rods, and then poured it in with tremendous effect, "Then," exclaimed he, "the liberties of the country are safe!"

[9] After Bunker Hill no such plan as that of Burke, for instance could even be discussed.

The consequences of this battle were just of the same importance as the Revolution itself.

If there was nothing of value in the principles of the American Revolution, then there is nothing valuable in the battle of Bunker Hill and its consequences. But if the Revolution was an era in the history of man favorable to human happiness, if it was an event which marked the progress of man all over the world from despotism to liberty, then this monument is not raised without cause. Then the battle of Bunker Hill is not an event undeserving celebrations, commemorations, and rejoicings, now and in all coming times.

What, then, is the true and peculiar principle of the American Revolution, and of the systems of government which it has confirmed and established? The truth is, that the American Revolution was not caused by the instantaneous discovery of principles of government before unheard of, or the practical adoption of political ideas such as had never before entered into the minds of men. It was but the full development of principles of government, forms of society, and political sentiments, the origin of all which lay back two centuries in English and American history.

The discovery of America, its colonization by the nations of Europe, the history and progress of the Colonies, from their establishment to the time when the principal of them threw off their allegiance to the respective states by which they had been planted, and founded governments of their own, constitute one of the most interesting portions of the annals of man. These events occupied three hundred years, during which period civilization and knowledge made steady progress in the Old World; so that Europe, at the commencement of the nineteenth century, had become greatly changed from that Europe which began the colonization of America at the close of the fifteenth or the commencement of the sixteenth. And what is most material to my present

purpose is, that in the progress of the first of these centuries, that is to say, from the discovery of America to the settlements of Virginia and Massachusetts, political and religious events took place which most materially affected the state of society and the sentiments of mankind, especially in England and in parts of Continental Europe. After a few feeble and unsuccessful efforts by England, under Henry VII., to plant colonies in America, no designs of that kind were prosecuted for a long period, either by the English Government or any of its subjects. Without inquiring into the cause of this delay, its consequences are sufficiently clear and striking. England, in this lapse of a century, unknown to herself, but under the providence of God and the influence of events, was fitting herself for the work of colonizing North America, on such principles, and by such men, as should spread the English name and English blood, in time, over a great portion of the Western hemisphere. The commercial spirit was greatly fostered by several laws passed in the reign of Henry VII.; and in the same reign encouragement was given to arts and manufactures in the eastern counties, and some not unimportant modifications of the feudal system took place by allowing the breaking of entails. These and other measures, and other occurrences, were making way for a new class of society to emerge and show itself in a military and feudal age; a middle class, between the barons or great landholders and the retainers of the Crown on the one side, and the tenants of the Crown and barons, and agricultural and other laborers, on the other side. With the rise and growth of this new class of society, not only did commerce and the arts increase, but better education, a greater degree of knowledge, juster notions of the true ends of government, and sentiments favorable to civil liberty, began to spread abroad, and become more and more common. But the plants springing from these seeds were of slow growth. The character of English society had indeed begun to under-

go a change; but changes of national character are ordinarily the work of time. Operative causes were, however, evidently in existence, and sure to produce, ultimately, their proper effect. From the accession of Henry VII. to the breaking out of the civil wars,[10] England enjoyed much greater exemption from war, foreign and domestic, than for a long period before, and during the controversy between the houses of York and Lancaster.[11] These years of peace were favorable to commerce and the arts Commerce and arts augmented general and individual knowledge; and knowledge is the only fountain, both of the love and the principles of human liberty.

Other powerful causes soon came into active play. The Reformation of Luther broke out, kindling up the minds of men afresh, leading to new habits of thought, and awakening in individuals energies before unknown even to themselves. The religious controversies of this period changed society as well as religion: indeed, it would be easy to prove, if this occasion were proper for it, that they changed society to a considerable extent, where they did not change the religion of the state. They changed man himself, in his modes of thought, his consciousness of his own powers, and his desire of intellectual attainment. The spirit of commercial and foreign adventure, therefore, on the one hand, which had gained so much strength and influence since the time of the discovery of America; and, on the other, the assertion and maintenance of religious liberty, having their source indeed in the Reformation, but continued, diversified, and constantly strengthened by the subsequent divisions of sentiment and opinion among the Reformers themselves; and this love of religious liberty, drawing after it, or bringing along with it, as it always does, an ardent devotion to

[10] 1485–1642.

[11] The great civil dissensions called the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century.

the principle of civil liberty also,—were the powerful influences under which character was formed, and men trained, for the great work of introducing English civilization, English law, and, what is more than all, Anglo-Saxon blood, into the wilderness of North America. Raleigh and his companions [12] may be considered as the creatures, principally, of the first of these causes. High-spirited, full of the love of personal adventure, excited, too, in some degree, by the hopes of sudden riches from the discovery of mines of the precious metals, and not unwilling to diversify the labors of settling a colony with occasional cruising against the Spaniards in the West Indian seas, they crossed and recrossed the ocean with a frequency which surprises us when we consider the state of navigation, and which evinces a most daring spirit.

The other cause peopled New England. The "Mayflower" sought our shores under no high-wrought spirit of commercial adventure, no love of gold, no mixture of purpose warlike or hostile to any human being. Like the dove from the ark, she had put forth only to find rest. Solemn supplications on the shore of the sea in Holland had invoked for her, at her departure, the blessings of Providence. The stars which guided her were the unobscured constellations of civil and religious liberty. Her deck was the altar of the living God. Fervent prayers on bended knees mingled, morning and evening, with the voices of ocean and the sighing of the wind in her shrouds. Every prosperous breeze which, gently swelling her sails, helped the Pilgrims onward in their course, awoke new anthems of praise; and when the elements were wrought into fury, neither the tempest, tossing their fragile bark like a feather, nor the darkness and howling of the midnight storms, ever disturbed in man or woman the firm and settled purpose of

[12] In 1584, a company, of which Sir Walter Raleigh was the moving spirit, sent an exploring party to Virginia, and in 1585 a party that made a temporary settlement.

their souls, to undergo all and to do all that the meekest patience, the boldest resolution, and the highest trust in God, could enable human beings to suffer or to perform.

Some differences may, doubtless, be traced at this day between the descendants of the early colonists of Virginia and those of New England, owing to the different influences and different circumstances under which the respective settlements were made, but only enough to create a pleasing variety in the midst of a general family resemblance.

> "Facies non omnibus una,
> Nec diversa tamen ; qualem decet esse sororum." [13]

But the habits, sentiments, and objects of both soon became modified by local causes, growing out of their condition in the New World; and as this condition was essentially alike in both, and as both at once adopted the same general rules and principles of English jurisprudence, and became accustomed to the authority of representative bodies, these differences gradually diminished. They disappeared by the progress of time and the influence of intercourse. The necessity of some degree of union and coöperation to defend themselves against the savage tribes, tended to excite in them mutual respect and regard. They fought together in the wars against France.[14] The great and common cause of the Revolution bound them to one another by new links of brotherhood; and at length the present constitution of government united them, happily and gloriously, to form the great republic of the world, and bound up their interests and fortunes, till the whole earth sees that there is now for them, in present possession as well as in future hope, but "One Country, One Constitution, and One Destiny."

[13] "The features are not the same in all, nor yet very different: they are such as those of sisters ought to be."—Ovid, Met., II, 13.

[14] The French and English in America were naturally at war whenever France and England were, until the peace of 1763 at the end of the Seven Years' War, which gave the French possessions in America over to the English.

The colonization of the tropical region, and the whole of the southern parts of the continent, by Spain and Portugal, was conducted on other principles, under the influence of other motives, and followed by far different consequences. From the time of its discovery, the Spanish Government pushed forward its settlements in America, not only with vigor, but with eagerness; so that, long before the first permanent English settlement had been accomplished in what is now the United States, Spain had conquered Mexico, Peru, and Chile, and stretched her power over nearly all the territory she ever acquired on this continent. The rapidity of these conquests is to be ascribed, in a great degree, to the eagerness, not to say the rapacity, of those numerous bands of adventurers who were stimulated by individual interests and private hopes to subdue immense regions, and take possession of them in the name of the Crown of Spain. The mines of gold and silver were the the incitements of these efforts; and accordingly settlements were generally made, and Spanish authority established, immediately on the subjugation of territory, that the native population might be set to work by their new Spanish masters in the mines. From these facts, the love of gold—gold not produced by industry, nor accumulated by commerce, but gold dug from its native bed in the bowels of the earth, and that earth ravished from its rightful possessors by every possible degree of enormity, cruelty, and crime—was long the governing passion in Spanish wars and Spanish settlement in America. Even Columbus himself did not wholly escape the influence of this base motive. In his early voyages we find him passing from island to island, inquiring everywhere for gold, as if God had opened the New World to the knowledge of the Old, only to gratify a passion equally senseless and sordid, and to offer up millions of an unoffending race of men to the destruction of the sword, sharpened both by cruelty and rapacity. And yet

Columbus was far above his age and country; enthusiastic, indeed, but sober, religious, and magnanimous; born to great things, and capable of high sentiments, as his noble discourse before Ferdinand and Isabella, as well as the whole history of his life, shows. Probably he sacrificed much to the known sentiments of others, and addressed to his followers motives likely to influence them. At the same time, it is evident that he himself looked upon the world which he discovered as a world of wealth all ready to be seized and enjoyed.

The conquerors and the European settlers of Spanish America were mainly military commanders and common soldiers. The monarchy of Spain was not transferred to this hemisphere; but it acted in it, as it acted at home, through its ordinary means and its true representative, military force. The robbery and destruction of the native race was the achievement of standing armies, in the right of the King and by his authority; fighting in his name, for the aggrandizement of his power and the extension of his prerogatives, with military ideas under arbitrary maxims,—a portion of that dreadful instrumentality by which a perfect despotism governs a people. As there was no liberty in Spain, how could liberty be transmitted to Spanish colonies?

The colonists of English America were of the people, and a people already free. They were of the middle, industrious, and already prosperous class, the inhabitants of commercial and manufacturing cities, among whom liberty first revived and respired after a sleep of a thousand years in the bosom of the Dark Ages. Spain descended on the New World in the armed and terrible image of her monarchy and her soldiery; England approached it in the winning and popular garb of personal rights, public protection, and civil freedom. England transplanted liberty to America; Spain transplanted power. England, through the agency of

private companies and the efforts of individuals, colonized this part of North America by industrious individuals, making their own way in the wilderness, defending themselves against the savages, recognizing their right to the soil, and with a general honest purpose of introducing knowledge as well as Christianity among them. Spain stooped on South America like a vulture on its prey. Everything was force. Territories were acquired by fire and sword. Cities were destroyed by fire and sword. Hundreds of thousands of human beings fell by fire and sword. Even conversion to Christianity was attempted by fire and sword.

Behold, then, fellow citizens, the difference resulting from the operation of the two principles! Here, to-day, on the summit of Bunker Hill, and at the foot of this monument, behold the difference! I would that the fifty thousand voices present could proclaim it with a shout which should be heard over the globe. Our inheritance was of liberty, secured and regulated by law, and enlightened by religion and knowledge; that of South America was of power,—stern, unrelenting, tyrannical, military power. And now look to the consequences of the two principles on the general and aggregate happiness of the human race. Behold the results in all the regions conquered by Cortes and Pizarro, and the contrasted results here. I suppose the territory of the United States may amount to one eighth, or one tenth, of that colonized by Spain on this continent; and yet in all that vast region there are but between one and two millious of people of European color and European blood, while in the United States there are fourteen millions who rejoice in their descent from the people of the more northern part of Europe.

But we may follow the difference in the original principle of colonization, and in its character and objects, still further. We must look to moral and intellectual results; we must consider consequences, not only as they show themselves in

hastening or retarding the increase of population and the supply of physical wants, but in their civilization, improvement and happiness. We must inquire what progress has been made in the true science of liberty, in the knowledge of the great principles of self-government, and in the progress of man as a social, moral and religious being.

I would not willingly say anything on this occasion discourteous to the new governments founded on the demolition of the power of the Spanish monarchy.[15] They are yet on their trial, and I hope for a favorable result. But truth, sacred truth, and fidelity to the cause of civil liberty, compel me to say, that hitherto they have discovered quite too much of the spirit of that monarchy from which they separated themselves. Quite too frequent resort is made to military force; and quite too much of the substance of the people is consumed in maintaining armies, not for defense against foreign aggression, but for enforcing obedience to domestic authority. Standing armies are the oppressive instruments for governing the people in the hands of hereditary and arbitrary monarchs. A military republic, a government founded on mock elections and supported only by the sword, is a movement indeed, but a retrograde and disastrous movement, from the regular and old fashioned monarchical systems. If men would enjoy the blessings of republican government, they must govern themselves by reason, by mutual counsel and consultation, by a sense and feeling of general interest, and by the acquiescence of the minority in the will of the majority, properly expressed; and, above all, the military must be kept, according to the language of our Bill of Rights, in strict subordination to the civil authority. Wherever this lesson is not both learned and practised, there can be no political freedom. Absurd, preposterous is it, a scoff and a satire on free forms of constitutional liberty, for frames of government to be prescribed by military

[15] See p. 67, note.

leaders, and the right of suffrage to be exercised at the point of the sword.

Making all allowance for situation and climate, it cannot be doubted by intelligent minds that the difference now existing between North and South America is justly attributable, in a great degree, to political institutions in the Old World and in the New. And how broad that difference is! Suppose an assembly, in one of the valleys or on the side of one of the mountains of the southern half of the hemisphere, to be held this day in the neighborhood of a large city—what would be the scene presented? Yonder is a volcano, flaming and smoking, but shedding no light, moral or intellectual. At its foot is the mine, sometimes yielding, perhaps, large gains to capital, but in which labor is destined to eternal and unrequited toil, and followed only by penury and beggary. The city is filled with armed men; not a free people, armed and coming forth voluntarily to rejoice in a public festivity, but hireling troops, supported by forced loans, excessive impositions on commerce, or taxes wrung from a half-fed and a half-clothed population. For the great there are palaces covered with gold; for the poor there are hovels of the meanest sort. There is an ecclesiastical hierarchy, enjoying the wealth of princes; but there are no means of education for the people. Do public improvements favor intercourse between place and place? So far from this, the traveler cannot pass from town to town without danger, every mile, of robbery and assassination. I would not overcharge or exaggerate this picture; but its principal features are all too truly sketched.

And how does it contrast with the scene now actually before us? Look round upon these fields; they are verdant and beautiful, well cultivated, and at this moment loaded with the riches of the early harvest. The hands which till them are those of the free owners of the soil, enjoying equal rights, and protected by law from oppression and tyranny.

Look to the thousand vessels in our sight, filling the harbor, or covering the neighboring sea. They are the vehicles of a profitable commerce, carried on by men who know that the profits of their hardy enterprise, when they make them, are their own; and this commerce is encouraged and regulated by wise laws, and defended, when need be, by the valor and patriotism of the country. Look to that fair city, the abode of so much diffused wealth,[16] so much general happiness and comfort, so much personal independence, and so much general knowledge, and not undistinguished, I may be permitted to add, for hospitality and social refinement. She fears no forced contributions, no siege or sacking from military leaders of rival factions. The hundred temples in which her citizens worship God are in no danger of sacrilege. The regular administration of the laws encounters no obstacle. The long processions of children and youth which you see this day issuing by thousands from her free schools, prove the care and anxiety with which a popular government provides for the education and morals of the people. Everywhere there is order; everywhere there is security. Everywhere the law reaches to the highest, and reaches to the lowest, to protect all in their rights, and so restrain all from wrong; and over all hovers Liberty,—that Liberty for which our fathers fought and fell on this very spot,—with her eye ever watchful and her eagle wing ever wide outspread.

The colonies of Spain, from their origin to their end, were subject to the sovereign authority of the mother country. Their government, as well as their commerce, was a strict home monopoly. If we add to this the established usage of filling important posts in the administration of the colonies exclusively by natives of Old Spain, thus cutting off forever all hopes of honorable preferment from every man born in the Western hemisphere, causes enough rise up before us

[16] Enjoyed by many without being very rich or very poor.

at once to account fully for the subsequent history and character of these provinces. The viceroys and provincial governors of Spain were never at home in their governments in America. They did not feel that they were of the people whom they governed. Their official character and employment have a good deal of resemblance to those of the proconsuls of Rome in Asia, Sicily, and Gaul, but obviously no resemblance to those of Carver and Winthrop,[17] and very little to those of the governors of Virginia after that Colony had established a popular House of Burgesses.[18]

The English colonists in America, generally speaking, were men who were seeking new homes in a new world. They brought with them their families and all that was most dear to them. This was especially the case with the colonists of Plymouth and Massachusetts. Many of them were educated men, and all possessed their full share, according to their social condition, of the knowledge and attainments of that age. The distinctive characteristic of their settlement is the introduction of the civilization of Europe into a wilderness, without bringing with it the political institutions of Europe. The arts, sciences, and literature of England came over with the settlers. That great portion of the common law which regulates the social and personal relations and conduct of men came also.[19] The jury came; the *habeas corpus* came; the testamentary power came; and the law of inheritance and descent came also, except that part of it which recognizes the rights of primogeniture,[20] which either did not come at all, or soon gave way to the rule of equal partition of estates among children. But the monarchy did not come, nor the aristocracy, nor the church, as an estate

[17] John Carver was the first governor of the Plymouth Colony, John Winthrop of Massachusetts.

[18] The House of Burgesses, or General Assembly, of Virginia was first called in 1619.

[19] The people were interested in law.

[20] The principle by which the oldest son inherited the father's property.

of the realm. Political institutions were to be framed anew, such as should be adapted to the state of things. But it could not be doubtful what should be the nature and character of these institutions. A general social equality prevailed among the settlers, and an equality of political rights seemed the natural, if not the necessary consequence. After forty years of revolution, violence, and war, the people of France have placed at the head of the fundamental instrument of their government, as the great boon obtained by all their sufferings and sacrifices, the declaration that all Frenchmen are equal before the law.[21] What France has reached only by the expenditure of so much blood and treasure, and the perpetration of so much crime, the English colonists obtained by simply changing their place, carrying with them the intellectual and moral culture of Europe, and the personal and social relations to which they were accustomed, but leaving behind their political institutions. It has been said with much vivacity, that the felicity of the American colonists consisted in their escape from the past. This is true so far as respects political establishments, but no farther.[22] They brought with them a full portion of all the riches of the past, in science, in art, in morals, religion, and literature. The Bible came with them. And it is not to be doubted, that to the free and universal reading of the Bible, in that age, men were much indebted for right views of civil liberty. The Bible is a book of faith, and a book of doctrine, and a book of morals, and a book of religion, of the especial revelation from God; but it is also a book which teaches man his own individual responsibility, his own dignity, and his equality with his fellow man.

Bacon and Locke, and Shakespeare and Milton,[23] also came with the colonists. It was the object of the first settlers to

[21] In the constitution of 1830 which established Louis Philippe.

[22] i. e. they were no longer under the direct government of kings.

[23] The great figures of English thought and literature.

form new political systems; but all that belonged to cultivated man, to family, to neighborhood, to social relations, accompanied them. In the Doric [24] phrase of one of our own historians, "They came to settle on bare creation;" but their settlement in the wilderness, nevertheless, was not a lodgment of nomadic tribes, a mere resting-place of roaming savages. It was the beginning of a permanent community, the fixed residence of cultivated men. Not only was English literature read, but English, good English, was spoken and written, before the ax had made way to let in the sun upon the habitations and fields of Plymouth and Massachusetts. And, whatever may be said to the contrary, a correct use of the English language is, at this day, more general throughout the United States than it is throughout England herself.

But another grand characteristic is, that in the English Colonies political affairs were left to be managed by the colonists themselves. This is another fact wholly distinguishing them in character, as it has distinguished them in fortune, from the colonists of Spain. Here lies the foundation of that experience in self-government which has preserved order and security and regularity amidst the play of popular institutions. Home government was the secret of the prosperity of the North-American settlements.[25] The more distinguished of the New-England colonists, with a most remarkable sagacity and a long-sighted reach into futurity, refused to come to America unless they could bring with them charters providing for the administration of their affairs in this country. They saw from the first the evils of being governed in the New World by a power fixed in the Old. Acknowledging the general superiority of the Crown, they still insisted on the right of passing local laws,

[24] plain, simple.

[25] Webster does not mean that Great Britain had no authority, but the Colonies were in general governed by their own laws and by their own people.

and of local administration. And history teaches us the justice and the value of this determination in the example of Virginia. The early attempts to settle that Colony failed, sometimes with the most melancholy and fatal consequences, from want of knowledge, care, and attention on the part of those who had the charge of their affairs in England; and it was only after the issuing of the third charter that its prosperity fairly commenced. The cause was, that by that third charter the people of Virginia, for by this time they deserved to be so called, were allowed to constitute and establish the first popular representative assembly which ever convened on this continent,—the Virginia House of Burgesses.

The great elements, then,[26] of the American system of government, originally introduced by the colonists, and which were early in operation, and ready to be developed more and more as the progress of events should justify or demand, were:—

Escape from the existing political systems of Europe, including its religious hierarchies, but the continued possession and enjoyment of its science and arts, its literature and its manners;

Home government, or the power of making in the Colony the municipal laws which were to govern it;

Equality of rights;

Representative assemblies, or forms of government founded on popular elections.

Few topics are more inviting, or more fit for philosophical discussion, than the effect on the happiness of mankind of institutions founded upon these principles; or, in other words, the influence of the New World upon the Old.

Her obligations to Europe for science and art, laws, literature, and manners, America acknowledges as she ought, with

[26] Notice how Webster begins a paragraph of Summary.

respect and gratitude. The people of the United States, descendants of the English stock, grateful for the treasures of knowledge derived from their English ancestors, admit also, with thanks and filial regard, that among those ancestors, under the culture of Hampden and Sidney [27] and other assiduous friends, that seed of popular liberty first germinated, which on our own soil has shot up to its full height, until its branches overshadow all the land.

But America has not failed to make returns. If she has not wholly canceled the obligation, or equaled it by others of like weight, she has at least made respectable advances towards repaying the debt. And she admits that, standing in the midst of civilized nations and in a civilized age, a nation among nations, there is a high part which she is expected to act for the general advancement of human interests and human welfare.

American mines have filled the mints of Europe with the precious metals. The productions of the American soil and climate have poured out their abundance of luxuries for the tables of the rich and of necessaries for the sustenance of the poor. Birds and animals of beauty and value have been added to the European stocks; and transplantations from the unequaled riches of our forests have mingled themselves profusely with the elms and ashes and druidical oaks of England.

America has made contributions to Europe far more important. Who can estimate the amount, or the value, of the augmentation of the commerce of the world that has resulted from America? Who can imagine to himself what would now be the shock to the Eastern Continent, if the Atlantic were no longer traversable, or if there were no longer American productions or American markets?

[27] John Hampden (1594-1643) and Algernon Sidney (1622-83), English patriots distinguished for their fearless advocacy of the rights of the people in opposition to kingly tyranny.

But America exercises influences, or holds out examples, for the consideration of the Old World, of a much higher, because they are of a moral and political character.[28]

America has furnished to Europe proof of the fact that popular institutions, founded on equality and the principle of representation, are capable of maintaining governments able to secure the rights of person, property, and reputation.

America has proved that it is practicable to elevate the mass of mankind,—that portion which in Europe is called the laboring, or lower class,—to raise them to self-respect, to make them competent to act a part in the great right and great duty of self-government; and she has proved that this may be done by education and the diffusion of knowledge. She holds out an example, a thousand times more encouraging than ever was presented before, to those nine tenths of the human race who are born without hereditary fortune or hereditary rank.

America has furnished to the world the character of Washington. And, if our American institutions had done nothing else, that alone would have entitled them to the respect of mankind.

Washington! "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen!"[29] Washington was all our own! The enthusiastic veneration and regard in which the people of the United States hold him prove them to be worthy of such a countryman; while his reputation abroad reflects the highest honor on his country. I would cheerfully put the question to-day to the intelligence of Europe and the world, What character of the century, upon the whole, stands out in the relief of history, most pure, most respectable, most sublime? and I doubt not, that, by a suffrage approaching to unanimity, the answer would be, Washington!

[28] Those just mentioned had been of a material and commercial character.

[29] Quoted from the oration of Henry Lee on the death of Washington.

The structure now standing before us, by its uprightness, its solidity, its durability, is no unfit emblem of his character. His public virtues and public principles were as firm as the earth on which it stands; his personal motives, as pure as the serene heaven in which its summit is lost. But, indeed, though a fit, it is an inadequate emblem. Towering high above the column which our hands have builded, beheld, not by the inhabitants of a single city or a single State, but by all the families of man, ascends the colossal grandeur of the character and life of Washington. In all the constituents of the one, in all the acts of the other, in all its titles to immortal love, admiration, and renown, it is an American production. It is the embodiment and vindication of our Transatlantic liberty. Born upon our soil, of parents also born upon it; never for a moment having had sight of the Old World; instructed, according to the modes of his time, only in the spare, plain, but wholesome elementary knowledge which our institutions provide for the children of the people; growing up beneath and penetrated by the genuine influences of American society; living, from infancy to manhood and age, amidst our expanding but not luxurious civilization; partaking in our great destiny of labor, our long contest with unreclaimed nature and uncivilized man, our agony of glory, the war of Independence, our great victory of peace, the formation of the Union and the establishment of the Constitution,—he is all, all our own! Washington is ours. That crowded and glorious life,—

> "Where multitudes of virtues passed along,
> Each pressing foremost, in the mighty throng
> Ambitious to be seen, then making room
> For greater multitudes that were to come,"—

that life was the life of an American citizen.

I claim him for America. In all the perils, in every darkened moment of the state, in the midst of the reproaches of

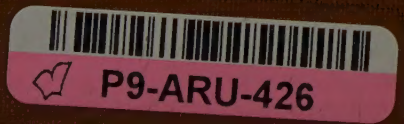
enemies and the misgivings of friends, I turn to that transcendent name for courage and for consolation. To him who denies or doubts whether our fervid liberty can be combined with law, with order, with the security of property, with the pursuits and advancement of happiness; to him who denies that our forms of government are capable of producing exultation of soul and the passion of true glory; to him who denies that we have contributed anything to the stock of great lessons and great examples,—to all these I reply by pointing to Washington.

And now, friends and fellow citizens, it is time to bring this discourse to a close.

We have indulged in gratifying recollections of the past, in the prosperity and pleasures of the present, and in high hopes for the future. But let us remember that we have duties and obligations to perform corresponding to the blessings which we enjoy. Let us remember the trust, the sacred trust, attaching to the rich inheritance which we have received from our fathers. Let us feel our personal responsibility, to the full extent of our power and influence, for the preservation of the principles of civil and religious liberty. And let us remember that it is only religion and morals and knowledge, that can make men respectable [30] and happy under any form of government. Let us hold fast the great truth, that communities are responsible, as well as individuals; that no government is respectable which is not just; that without unspotted purity of public faith, without sacred public principle, fidelity, and honor, no mere forms of government, no machinery of laws, can give dignity to political society. In our day and generation let us seek to raise and improve the moral sentiment, so that we may look, not for a degraded, but for an elevated and improved future. And when both we and our children shall have been consigned to

[30] To be respected.

the house appointed for all living, may love of country and pride of country glow with equal fervor among those to whom our names and our blood shall have descended! And then, when honored and decrepit age shall lean against the base of this monument, and troops of ingenuous youth shall be gathered round it,and when the one shall speak to the other of its objects, the purposes of its construction, and the great and glorious events with which it is connected, there shall rise from every youthful breast the ejaculation, "Thank God, I—I also—AM AN AMERICAN!"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